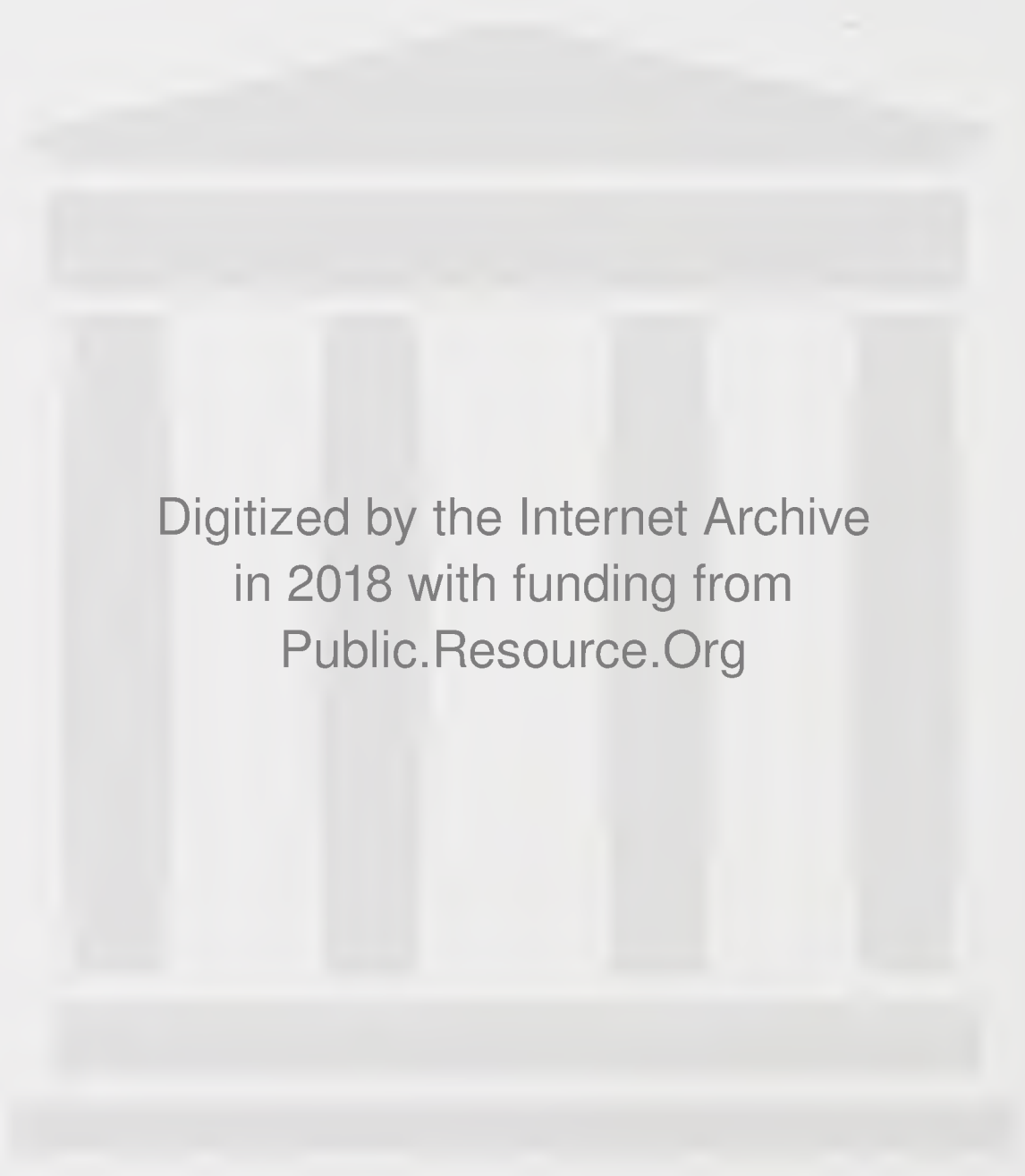


Immortal Fighter of 1857

NANA SAHEB PESHWA



Harikrishna Devsare



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IMMORTAL FIGHTER OF 1857 NANA SAHEB PESHWA

Harikrishna Devsare

Translated from Hindi by
Viren Verma



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PREFACE

The great freedom struggle of Eighteen Hundred Fifty Seven is a glorious ballad of Indian History in which such amazing attempt to win freedom for the country and to root out the foreign rule was made that British rulers themselves were taken aback. It was only their good fortune that the revolution planned against the British rule was flared up by women of Meerut before time and the British not only became alert but in order to crush the revolution whereas they threw in all their might, they also initiated measures to consolidate British rule in India. Even British historians have recognised the Meerut incident to be advantageous for them.

The name of the man who had prepared ground for the year Fifty Seven revolution and its secret organisation with his colleagues Ajimullah Khan, Tatya Tope, Jwala Prasad etc. in Bithur, was Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa. He was an adopted son of Peshwa Bajirao. Nana Saheb had planned such a revolution in Indian history that had it flared up according to his plan, in the entire country on the pre-determined date 31st May 1857, then, as admitted by British historians themselves, it was impossible for them to stay on in India for what to say of a day but an hour more. But it could not be so.

What an irony it is that pro-British Indian historians have confined Nana Saheb's plan of revolution, whose organisational strength has been admired by even British historians, to the description of 'soldiers' rebellion' by saying that Nana Saheb's opposition and revolt was due only to the fact that British Government had stopped his paternal pension. But why do we forget that due to mutual discord all indigenous rulers of India were scattered at that time and were not only playing into the hands of British but in having India into the clutches of chains

of servitude they were helping them too. In the circumstances, Nana Saheb's plan of revolution was extraordinary. Besides, we should not forget also that this was not merely an expression of his personal pain but the pain of people of the whole country, who had suffered in the hands of British for a hundred years, was also involved in it.

The organisation that Nana Saheb had raised for the revolution was so secret and amazing that Britishers had no inkling about it. Even British historians have commended implementation of his plan. The efficiency with which Nana Saheb had spread his organisation throughout the country for the struggle, the way he had sent abroad and to every corner of the country his propagandists, despite lack of means of communication, is indicative of his amazing organising ability and talent.

Once the revolution flared up before the due date, to make it wait till the due date was beyond anyone and so Nana Saheb assumed the responsibility to take it forward to the goal of success. The spirit that he had roused among freedom lovers of the country had shaken the British rule. But with Britishers getting time to crush the revolution, Indian Army itself attacking Indians, refusal of many kings to cooperate with revolutionaries and instead giving support to the British, the 1857 revolution failed. However, to make it a success Nana, with associated heroes of revolution, Tatya Tope, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Maulvi Ahmedshah etc. fought till the last breath.

In this book, those aspects of Nana Saheb's personality and actions are highlighted that prove that he was the main operator of 1857 revolution. Contrary to pro-British historians' account, in this book the character of Nana Saheb has been presented as an amazing visionary of revolution and a patriot that he truly deserved. It is hoped that readers will find this glorious ballad stimulating. Applauds to Government of India's Publications Division for implementing the scheme of publishing books on the great heroes of 1857 revolution.

— *Harikrishna Devsare*

*“In this great holy fire of freedom
Many brave men sacrificed their lives
Nana Dhundhupant, Tatya, clever Ajimullah Khan,
Ahmedshah Maulvi, Thakur Kunwar Singh,
Soldier Abhiram.*

*Whose names will remain immortal
In the sky of Indian History.”*

*– from the famous poem of Subhadra Kumari Chauhan,
‘Jhansi ki Rani’*

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End of Peshwa Tradition

Bajirao was the last Peshwa.* At that time Britishers' design was to cause a rift among Maratha rulers and take over states ruled by them. In the court of Peshwa there was an aware and farsighted man, Nana Phadnavis who understood Britishers' designs and did not let them succeed. But Nana Phadnavis died on 13th February 1800. That cleared the way for fulfilment of Britishers' desires. As a matter of fact Bajirao Peshwa was a weak and short sighted ruler. Historians write that with the influence of Nana Phadnavis in Poona (now Pune) court coming to an end, Britishers started laying the grounds for their evil designs. Those days a major part in finishing off the maratha power base was played by the then Governor-General Marquis Walleseley and his brother Col. Arthur Walleseley. Tricks adopted by Britishers at the time can be understood by a letter that was written by Marquis Walleseley from calcutta to Madras Governor Lord Clive. This Lord Clive was the son of that Lord Clive who had sought British Prime Minister's approval on the outline of his plan of a possible British rule in India. In his letter of 23rd August 1800, Marquis Walleseley had written, "it is possible that a combination of a major part of Colonel Arthur Walleseley's army, Nizam's army and an army of Bombay may have to attack Poona in a short while. Therefore, Colonel Walleseley must be prepared for this possibility. What will be desirable is that Col.

After the rule of Shivaji Maharaj's grandson Shahuji, the Maratha Empire split into many states under various chieftains. These chieftains were - Peshwas of Pune, Holkars of Indore, Scindias of Gwalior and Gaikwars of Baroda. 'Peshwa' was the title of the Prime Minister of undivided Maratha Empire. Peshwas of Pune were the most distinguished.

Walleseley kept his hold on the Maratha territory. One of the following two things may happen—first is that Bajirao may flee from Poona and the second that Daulatrao Scindia may hold back Bajirao. In both these eventualities, if Col. Walleseley sets himself well right now within Maratha territory, it will be that much easier for me to attack Poona. Therefore, you may immediately inform Col. Walleseley that the British army has been ordered and authorised to seize, in the name and on behalf of Peshwa, all territory upto the Krishna river as soon as it gets confirmed news of Bajirao's running away or his imprisonment. Even those forts or strong positions, which Col. Walleseley may find fit to be in British possession, should be seized in the name of Peshwa. Col. Walleseley must take care that they go on consoling residents of the country that the only purpose of British government behind these operations was to see that the Peshwa got his legitimate rights back."

Marquis Walleseley wanted to somehow bring Maratha-ruled states under Britishers' domination. He had entrusted the job of convincing Bajirao and making him agree to a pact with Britishers, to Colonel Palmer who was a British representative in Poona court. Commenting on his efforts, historian Mill has written, "Bajirao accepted to provide to the Company's army six infantrys on a permanent basis and to defray expenses on an Artillery of relevant size. This was what Governor Walleseley wanted. To make arrangements for this requirement, Bajirao promised to set aside an area providing an income of Rs. 25 lakhs annually. Now the difference between Walleseley's demand and Bajirao's condition had narrowed down just to a situation where Walleseley wanted this army to be stationed in Peshwa's area while Bajirao insisted that the army stationed in the Company's area and entered Peshwa's territory only when required by him. Bajirao was adamant on this. At the time, there used to be a British representative Colonel Palmer in the Poona court. In a letter to Governor General he wrote that in view of this proposal of Bajirao, I am afraid that unless faced with a situation of a definite fall, Bajirao would not settle for more than this."

Historian Mill has vividly described the then prevailing situation. “The reason why Bajirao did not fully agree with Walleseley was apparent. He had the example of Nizam before him. He knew that as the price of friendship with the British Nizam had to give a large chunk of his state to the Company in 1798. Along with this Nizam lost his freedom in the course of just two or three years. Practically, he remained a mere prisoner in the hands of the Company. Bajirao knew all this and this was the reason why he was accepting Company’s friendship half heartedly and wanted Company’s auxiliary force to be out of his state.”

After considering the conditions of Bajirao Peshwa Governor General Walleseley’s secretary Admonsten wrote a secret letter on 23rd June 1802 to Colonel Close, that speaks for Britishers’ tricks and intention both. “With his proposal to defray expenses of a British army Peshwa has attached certain conditions. Even if we accept them, with the operation of this proposal Peshwa will certainly come, to an extent, under domination of British power. Once a state comes under authority of another power to whatever extent, its dependence on the latter naturally continues to grow. Once it starts feeling secured with the help of foreign power its defences and alertness become lax. One result of the kind of pact being proposed would be also that the rift between Poona court and other members of the Maratha empire will widen, which in turn will increase quickly Peshwa’s dependence on the British authority. If we enter into a pact with the Peshwa then the possibility of all Maratha states coming together will come to an end. By forging this kind of relationship with a branch of Maratha empire, not only our position will be strengthened but this will also force other states under that empire to accept a similar pact with us.”

In another confidential letter too Marquis Walleseley had written that even if a single Maratha ruler enters into a pact of this kind with the Company, it will pave the way for many other Maratha states coming under domination of British government. Those who will accept this pact will come under our authority due to this

pact and the ones who would not accept will come under our domination for the lack of it.

Thus, Marquis Walleseley had only one goal at that time, that is to somehow break up the Maratha power. That was why he wanted that any one Maratha ruler accepted the pact to retain his subsidiary army. For this, in the south Col. Close was impressing upon Bajirao and in the north Col. Collins was trying to trap Daulatrao Scindia. Citing Col. Collins, historian Mill has written: "In other words, Scindia had not yet fallen to the extent that he would deliberately move into a situation in which the pact relating to Walleseley's 'alliance of security providing friendship and mutual trust' was mentioned."

In this case Britishers considered trapping Bajirao comparatively easier than to trap Daulatrao. On the other hand, Daulatrao Scindia worried too lest Bajirao got trapped by them. Daulatrao Scindia knew that if Peshwa accepted the security pact, it would be disastrous for the entire Maratha region. Therefore, Britishers set Jaswantrao Holkar against Scindia. Jaswantrao Holkar was already in clutches of Britishers. That was why, despite a truce with Daulatrao Scindia, he attacked him.

Now Britishers started inciting disturbances in Poona. Historians write that at the instance of Britishers Vithoji Holkar raised the flag of revolt against the Peshwa in Kolhapur. Peshwa's army arrested the rebel Vithoji and killed him. Then to avenge the death of Vithoji, Jaswantrao Holkar proceeded alongwith his army from Malwa to Poona. Both Peshwa and Scindia were friends of British company. Still, letters of Marquis Walleseley clearly indicate that Britishers were on this occasion, helping Jaswantrao Holkar against the two. The British troops under Col. Arthur Walleseley too had reached near Poona. Alarmed by an advancing Jaswantrao, Peshwa Bajirao accepted all the conditions of Marquis Walleseley on 11th October 1802. He wrote to the Resident that for having the subsidiary force, whose expenses I have already accepted to bear, permanently stationed, I would spare a fort across

Tungabhadra river within my state and for meeting its expenses I would set aside an area yielding an annual income of Rs. 25 lakhs in Gujarat or Karnataka. Thus all wishes of Marquis Walllesely were fulfilled in totality. With this, dissension in Maratha rule and 'unquestionable end' of Peshwa loomed large. Historian Mill writes that although Bajirao and Jaswantrao both wanted truce but Company rulers did not let it materialise because their coming together was not in Company's interest. Bajirao Peshwa was so much scared by Jaswantrao Holkar's forces that after delivering the letter to the British Resident he set out from Poona. He reached Basai on 16th December 1802 via Singhgarh, Raigarh, Mahad and Swarnadurga. When Jaswantrao Holkar saw that Bajirao Peshwa had run away leaving the throne of Poona, he installed Amritrao Peshwa, an adopted son of Raghoba on the throne of Poona.

In Basai Britishers assured Bajirao Peshwa that they will get him Poona's throne back. Under this pressure they got Bajirao to sign a new pact on 31st December 1802. Thus Bajirao became a complete slave of Britishers. An officer of the East India Company commented on Bajirao's plight in this way:

"Bajirao knew that his acceptance of this pact with foreigners will result in a complete end of his political freedom. This was always before his eyes or people around him always told him about how Tipu was finished and to what miserable position Nizam had reached after keeping Company's subsidiary force with him. We can conclude from this that Bajirao accepted the Basai pact against his will and under compulsion."

Referring to an officer of the East India Company it has been stated that the Company reinstalled Bajirao on the Poona throne in its own interest. Bajirao may have had other faults but his dealings with the British were always truthful.

Bajirao was very inept player on the political chessboard. Due to his shortsightedness he often played into hands of foreigners and became the cause of destruction of the Maratha rule. But he

always remained faithful to his friends. Many British authors and travellers have commended his truthfulness, his religious faith and his general ability to rule. Referring to Poona Gazetteer, it has been stated that the British representative in Poona court, Barry Close has also recognised his truthfulness. Likewise, Bombay's erudite Chief Justice Sir James Mackintosh has described Bajirao an abler ruler than England's George III and France's Napoleon both.

In 1811 Elphinston replaced Barry Close as the Resident of Poona. At that time, Company's Governor General Marquis of Hastings was particularly keen on those fertile regions of Bajirao's territory that yielded land revenue to the extent of about Rs. one and a half crore. Resident Elphinston was entrusted with the task of devising some way to usurp that region of Bajirao.

One more loyalist of Bajirao Peshwa, Tryambakji was an able and knowledgeable politician. Bajirao Peshwa had granted him an area in Gujarat. In fact, the border of this region touched a Company-ruled area and Britishers themselves were devising ways to usurp this region. Tryambakji used to explain to Peshwa tricks of Britishers and caution him. This news had reached Britishers. In fact, Elphinston had set two spies after Bajirao who kept an eye on his activities and reported to Elphinston. The name of one spy was Balaji Pant Natu and the other's was Yashwantrao Ghorpade. These fellows helped Elphinston in fabricating many true and false stories against Bajirao. These two had poisoned the mind of Elphinston against Tryambakji. Elphinston was convinced that Tryambakji was a thorn in way and had to be removed somehow. He charged Tryambakji of having appointed the killers of Gangadhar Shastri. It may be mentioned that Gangadhar Shastri was an extremely clever Brahmin. He belonged to a place near about Poona. Rising from being an ordinary domestic servant he had become an advocate of Baroda's king Gaikwad. Acting as a spy of Britishers in Baroda and Poona, he used to devise ways for destruction of both states. But circumstances took a different direction and differences between Peshwa and Gaikwad began to subside. Referring to

this, 'Bombay Gazetteer' has written that efforts of conciliation between Tryambakji and Peshwa were not allowed to succeed. Peshwa wanted to appoint Gangadhar his minister but at the insistence of Elphinston, this proposal was rejected by Gangadhar. Gangadhar Shastri had gone to Poona to strike peace between Peshwa and Gaikwad. After guessing the motives of Bajirao, Elphinston did not at all wish that Gangadhar should stay there. He was repeatedly sending him messages to come to Baroda. In the meanwhile, Gangadhar Shastri went on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur with Peshwa. On 14th July 1815 some unknown people attacked Gangadhar Shastri in Pandharpur and killed him. Apparently, Elphinston was to say that Bajirao Peshwa and Tryambakji were involved in this murder.

'Bombay Gazetteer' has written, "...months before this murder Gangadhar Shastri, Bajirao and Tryambakji had come together. And it was this union that officers of the Company could not digest. The life and character of Tryambakji do not suggest anything by which he could be held responsible for this murder. In fact, at that time Gangadhar Shastri had freed himself from the clutches of Elphinston. Gangadhar had privy of black deeds of the Company in the south and Gujarat. For years he had been a spy of them and there can not be any doubt that by getting him killed, Elphinston had removed a new and dangerous thorn out of his way."

With the intention of fulfilling Marquis of Hastings' designs of initiating a war by inciting Bajirao, Elphinston raised the case of Tryambakji again. He pressurised Bajirao to immediately hand over Tryambakji to the Company as he was the murderer of British loyalist Gangadhar Shastri. This was a blatant lie. Bajirao refused to part with Tryambakji. But with the intention of exerting more pressure, Elphinston threatened to begin a war formally by surrounding Poona city with British forces. Bajirao was cowardly by nature. Company's forces were present in Poona. He was convinced that Elphinston could do anything. Therefore under compulsion Bajirao got "his dear Minister, innocent Tryambakji

imprisoned in Thana fort. Now, Peshwa Bajirao too had certainly started feeling humiliated and helpless.” (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj*, Sunderlal, p.617). Historians write about Tryambakji that although he was not educated, he had good understanding of politics. He was a true well wisher of the Maratha regime. His only fault was that he remained loyal to his master Bajirao Peshwa throughout his life and he not only frustrated Britishers’ designs but also forewarned Bajirao about them. As punishment of this crime he had to die rotting for years in a corner of the Chunar fort and even his last wish to breathe his last in Kashi was not acceded.

British policy to continuously weaken Bajirao Peshwa and to take possession of areas ruled by him continued unabated. Company had seized forts of Singhgarh, Purandar and Raigarh from him. But the entire Peshwa regime was yet to be usurped. So, it was now circulated that Bajirao was involved in Gangadhar Shastri’s murder. Hence, as compensation of this crime, a major part of Bajirao’s fertile porvince, which Hastings had longed for for quite some time, was demanded by the Company. On 13th June 1817 Bajirao was surrounded and at the point of bayonet, he was forced to sign on a new pact. According to this new pact Peshwa gave away entire Gujarat province, which Britishers looked at wistfully for years, to the Company.

Bajiraro Peshwa failed to find a way out. After the 13th June pact Bajirao left Poona and reached Pandharpur. Thereafter, he went to Satara. There he met a British officer Sir John Malcolm and told him as to how he was forced to sign on the pact on gunpoint. He also complained about Elphinston’s misbehavior and being spied upon even in his private life. Bajirao had no other recourse but to continue his friendship with Britishers in order to hold on to his position. He also expressed his desire to continue to do so in future. Malcolm advised him to raise a force in order to help the British in subduing pindaris. Bajirao could not understand this trick of Malcolm. He started raising an army. On the other side, Malcolm informed Elphinston about this cunning suggestion of him. Elphinston worte to Governor General that Bajirao was

raising the army to fight against the British. Britishers got an excuse and a British regiment reached Poona on 30th October 1817. On 5th November 1817 Britishers attacked Peshwa's army at Kharaki, a place near Poona. Bajirao had no other alternative. His troops had to respond to this attack. The Chief of Peshwa's army was Bapu Gokhale. Fierce fighting took place between the two armies. But treacherous people like Balaji Pant Natu and Yashwantrao Ghorpade had considerably weakened Peshwa's army. Because of these men, Peshwa's army left the field. Bajirao and Bapu Gokhale had to leave the field. Britishers won.

Bajirao's position was deteriorating. Britishers had armed skirmishes with him at many places and they continued to weaken his strength—whatever was left of it. In one battle Bapu Gokhale was killed, making Bajirao extremely weak. He lacked leadership qualities, hence despite having a force, there was no use. A perplexed Bajirao again took refuge in Sir John Malcolm and talked of reconciliation. Sir John Malcolm wrote a letter to Governor General as to how Britishers should treat Bajirao. Malcolm had written: "Since I am well acquainted with feelings of people of this country, from king to commoner, I can unhesitantly say that both glory and well-being of British government demand that instead of imprisoning or killing Bajirao, it will be better to get him agree to resign and he may be asked to go somewhere on a pension. If he is killed, people will have compassion for him, ambitions of some people may rise and people dissatisfied with a foreign rule may come together anytime under the banner of a new leader. If Bajirao is incarcerated, people will still have sympathy with him and people of Maharashtra will keep hoping that one day Bajirao will escape from prison and free his country. But if Bajirao dissolves his army and resigns then it will have a positive impact on people for us." In the same letter Sir John Malcolm had suggested a pension of Rs. 8 lakhs per annum for Bajirao. At that time Bajirao had about six thousand cavalry and five thousand infantry force with him. Asirgarh fort was still with him. Finally, on the orders of Governor General, Malcolm sent Bajirao to a

place called Bithur on bank of the Ganga river, near Kanpur on a pension of Rs.8 lakh per annum. A small part of Peshwa's region was given to the king of Satara as a Jagir (freehold). The rest came under possession of Britishers.

After signing that humiliating pact Peshwa Bajirao Second wanted to go to Varanasi and spend the rest of his life there. Britishers did not allow him to do so. The reason was that at the time many deposed kings had taken shelter there. Britishers were scared lest after reaching there, Bajirao may start organising these rulers against the British. Therefore, he was forced to live in Bithur. Historian Surendranath Sen writes: "British Government suggested Munger and Gorakhpur—but Munger was too hot which the Peshwa did not favour and Gorakhpur had no famous temple. He favoured a place near Yamuna, like Mathura. Finally, a place called Bithur, a few miles away from Kanpur was found appropriate for him and at last he settled there. He was given a Jagir, the residents of which were kept out of jurisdiction of general civil and criminal courts of the country. For maintenance of him and his family a pension of Rs. eight lakh per annum was fixed. Peshwa gradually adjusted himself with this life of banishment. The number of his dependants was still very large and all of them showed respect to him as a king, as before. What hurt Peshwa the most was that government was no longer addressing him in his earlier title of 'Pant Pradhan' but was using only the word 'Maharaja' for him in official correspondence."

Another historian has written: "By surrendering his mighty empire on the feet of Britishers and accepting a maintenance allowance of Rs. eight lakh per annum from them, Peshwa Bajirao made Bithur his home in 1819. He set out for Bithur along with his dependants, his immense riches and family members. Many loyal servants of the Maratha army and soldiers too were with him. A British officer Lieutenant Low was also proceeding with him as convoy. This caravan of the Peshwa reached Ajmer first. It stayed there a few months. It had not yet decided about the last halt. At the time of Peshwa Bajirao I, when Maratha forces

were sent to help Chhatrasal against the Nawab of Farrukhabad Muhammed Bangus, some Brahmin members of the forces had settled, with their families in Bithur. Descendants of these families had requested Bajirao II to settle in Bithur. Besides being an ancient religious place, Bithur is situated at banks of the river Ganga. Because of this too, the religious minded Peshwa thought it proper to live in Bithur. In February 1819 Peshwa Bajirao II reached Bithur. First he got constructed a building on the bank of river Ganga. Later, finding it not matching with his grandeur, he got constructed a huge enclosure spread over fifty seven Bighas (approx thirty five acres) of land. Hence, the building, constructed earlier on the bank of Ganga was given to Ramchandra Subedar. Britishers also gave to the Peshwa jagirs of two villages called Bithur and Ramel. Revenue and criminal justice rights of this jagir were also with the Peshwa. At that time, Bithur was the District Headquarter.”

A historian writes about Peshwa Bajirao II's marriage and his progeny: “During his ruling period Peshwa Bajirao had married six times. In the latter half of his life also he had married five times in Bithur. Thus, even after marrying eleven times, he had only two daughters. He was always sorrowful for not having a son. This religious belief also added to his grief, that he will not get solace in afterlife also because of not having a son. In 1827 a man from Venu village of Maharashtra, Madhav Narayan Bhatt along with his family also came to stay in Bithur in patronage of Bajirao II. After coming to Bithur, he got an opportunity to serve his patron. At that time, the age of Madhavrao Narayan Bhatt's son Govind (Nana Saheb) was two and a half years. This child of two and a half years had a very keen intellect. So, this child Govind became very popular in Peshwa's palace. When sonless Bajirao saw this child, he was very much impressed and he adopted this child. On 7th June 1827 Peshwa Bajirao declared this child as his heir.” Commenting on future challenges of this development of two and a half year old Nana Saheb becoming the heir of Peshwa's throne, in his book *'Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata*

Sangram' (Freedom struggle of eighteen hundred fifty seven), Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes: "Thus, this child, born in Venugram, due to his good deeds in earlier births, became an heir to the throne of Maharashtra state. To be an heir of Peshwa's throne is a matter of great fortune. But O brilliant Prince! With that fortune do you remember your coming responsibility or not? To acquire Peshwa's throne is no ordinary thing. Bajirao has adorned it. It has fought battles in Panipat. It had struck Bargaon's pact and the most important thing is that with the unclean touch of foreigners, occasion of its being polluted is coming soon. Or it has already come; you are aware of all this or not? To be an heir to throne means to defend its honour. Then, will you defend the honour of this seat of Peshwas or not? You will have to put the crown of victory on the head of this seat, otherwise you will have to be scorched in the burning pyre like Manini of Chittoor. In no other way honour of this seat of Peshwas could be saved. O brilliant Prince! Bearing this responsibility in mind you may occupy this seat of Maharashtra with pleasure. It was because of your father that people had to listen that this Peshwa's seat came to be protected by foreigners and this had caused a feeling of disgrace all around and everyone wanted that if this seat has to see its end, it should be as bright as its beginning. Even if one has to die, he should die after finishing off enemies. O majestic child! May you adorn this Peshwai seat of Maharashtra for a long time so that History could proudly declare, 'the last of the great Peshwas of this seat was Shrimant Nana Saheb whose first Peshwa was Balaji Vishwanath.' "

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar continues: "In those very days Moropant Tambe and his decent wife Bhagirathi lived in Shrikshetra Kashi under the patronage of Chimanaji Appa Saheb Peshwa. This couple was to immortalise its name in history - because they had the good fortune of giving birth to a girl child who illuminated like a lightning and was as sharp as a sword and presenting her to the service of mother India. But they could hardly imagine that! Maharani Laxmibai was born on 19 November 1835 in the lap of

this couple. The childhood name of this brave woman was Manubai. Hardly three-four years had elapsed after the birth of this promising girl and Tambe's entire family left Kashi to live under the benevolent patronage of Bajirao in Bithur."

The original name of Nana Saheb was Govind. After adoption Bajirao had named him Dhundhiraj Pant that degenerated later to Dhundhupant Peshwa. In Marathi 'Nana' means young. He was so named because he was the youngest son of his progenitor Madhav Narayan Bhatt. Although, Bajirao adopted later another son and a nephew of Madhav Narayan Bhatt, whose names were Dada Saheb and Bala Saheb respectively. Dada Saheb left this world in Peshwa Bajirao II's lifetime itself. After this, on Bajirao's advice, Dada Saheb's widow Rohinibai adopted the youngest nephew of Madhav Narayan Bhatt, Rao Saheb. In this way, Rao Saheb was considered son of Dada Saheb and grandson of Bajirao. Out of the three sons Bajirao had adopted, one Dada Saheb had died. Since Nana Dhundhupant was the first to be adopted, he was declared heir of the Peshwas.

For full thirty two years, Bajirao Peshwa remained detached from the throne of Poona. He died in 1851, when he was 75 years old. After him Nana Dhundhupant occupied the Peshwa's seat.

Period of Humiliation and Injustice

Peshwa Bajirao II had arranged for training in the art of war of his heir and adopted son, Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa since the latter's childhood. In Bithur both Moropant and Pandurang Bhatt were loyal to the Peshwa. Moropant Tambe looked after the administration of Bajirao and Pandurang Bhatt handled his religious rites. The daughter of Moropant Tambe was Manubai and the name of Pandurang Bhatt's son was Tatya. Both were childhood friends of Nana Saheb.

Peshwa Bajirao II loved very much both childhood friends of Nana Saheb. Even the responsibility of their education too was borne by him. Manubai was seven years old then. Bajirao used to lovingly call her Chhabilee. One day, Tatya, in the presence of Bajirao, got first position in archery. In appreciation, Bajirao gifted him a star-studded beautiful cap. From that day everyone called him 'Topi' and his 'Topi' got attached to his name in the form of 'Tope'. Bajirao's adopted son Nana Saheb was ten years younger than Tatya Tope and was about ten years older than Manubai. Thus, at that time Nana Saheb was about seventeen-eighteen years of age. One historian has written. "Although there were differences in their age, at least some part of their childhood must have been spent together. Nana Saheb had made Manubai his deemed sister. Every year, on the day of 'Bhaiya Dooj', she used to perform 'Aarti' of Nana Saheb and fed him delicious dishes. Likewise, Tatya Tope also considered her to be his sister. Bajirao's adopted grandson Rao Saheb was roughly of Nana Saheb's age. For education of each of them many teachers were appointed to teach different subjects to them."

In his book, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes. "When Shrimant Nana Saheb and his brother Rao Saheb were learning

military manoeuvres, that brilliant Chhabilee was also haltingly learning to read. Nana Saheb is sitting on an elephant's howda and this agile girl is entreating 'take me up there too'. Nana Saheb is sitting on a horse, and waiting for this Goddess-like girl to come there-at that very time Chhabilee, with a sword dangling from her waist, whose curly hair waving slightly with gusts of wind, whose fair complexion becoming pink due to labour of reining a volatite horse, appears and both of them set out swiftly on their horses." (*Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram*).

In the Marathi book 'Jhansichya Raniche Charitra' (Biography of Jhansi's Queen) its author Parasnees has referred to an incident that indicates the nature of mutual relationship between Nana Saheb, Tatya Tope and Chhabilee. Parasnees writes about the incident – "On an occasion of 'Bhaiya Duj' Manu gave a sword to Nana as a gift. She gave another sword to Tatya too. She asked her brother. "You have accepted my gift but did you understand the meaning of it?" "Yes, Chhabilee, very well understood. It is that with this very sword we will beat the enemies of Indian soil and snatchers of our freedom Britishers out of India. What do you say Tatya, do you accept this gift of Chhabilee or not?"

"Wherever your majesty will go, this servant will follow," Tatya replied. You will have to support too, Chhabilee." Nana said.

"Yes, brother, I will be one step ahead of you. As goddess Durga I will free my mother India by killing these modern demons. You and Tatya will be astonished to see my strategy." Manu replied. In 1842 Chhabilee was married to the king of Jhansi, Gangadhar Rao. She became queen Laxmibai of Jhansi. According to Bajirao Peshwa II's will, Nana Saheb occupied the seat of Peshwa.

Injustice to Nana Saheb

This was the time when kings of India were fighting among themselves and Britishers were taking advantage of it. Company's

Governor-General Lord Dalhousie and strategists of England had multiplied the thirst of colonialism to such an extent that it had crossed all limits. Historians write that leaving aside all pacts with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Dalhousie attacked Punjab, caused rift in Lahore court, banished Dalip Singh and his widowed mother, Maharani Zinda Kaur from India and annexed Punjab's fertile province into Company's rule. Disdaining the ancient custom of adoption followed by Indians, Dalhousie annexed many princely states like Satara, Jhansi, Nagpur etc. On the pretext of 'misrule' of Nawab he brought the fertile kingdom of Awadh into Company's fold in 1856. After imprisoning Wajid Ali Shah he sent him to Calcutta and by snatching paternal Jagirs of hundreds of big landowners, he made them paupers.

It may be mentioned here that Rani Laxmibai had given birth to a son in 1851 but he lived for only three months. Gangadhar Rao could not bear the shock of his death and took ill. Before Rao's death he had adopted a five-year old boy of his dynasty. Process of this adoption was completed according to rules in which all chieftains of Jhansi court and Deputy Political Agent of Bundelkhand Captain Martin was also present. Information about the adoption was also sent in writing to the Company government. Gangadhar Rao died on 21st November 1853. Finding a good opportunity to apply his policy, Dalhousie first declared adoption by Gangadhar Rao unacceptable and then issued a proclamation on 7th March 1854 to merge Jhansi into British state.

In fact, Dalhousie was in favour of merging any princely state into Company rule, whose ruler did not have an heir in the form of his own progeny. In this respect he had adopted the following policy: "Where a certain region is under our domination and if a small princely state within it is independent then we should extend our rule by capturing such a state. No one has a right to object to this. We are only troubled by these small states. By annexing them their own difficulties will be removed and we will also get pecuniary benefits. This is my definite judicious opinion. To follow this policy is British government's unavoidable

duty. No opportunity to annex princely states should be missed. Such opportunities are created. If a state has no successor or even in a case where such a successor has our approval, we should never commit a mistake of such kind of opportunities being slipped out of our hands.”

When in such circumstances Nana Dhundhupant occupied the Peshwa's seat, he wrote to Company government that Peshwa's pension be made in his name and that pension amount of Rs. 62,000 due to Bajirao, may also be paid to him. But how could Lord Dalhousie accede to this. For him there was a good opportunity of stopping rupees eight lakhs per annum, which were given to Bajirao. In reply to Nana Saheb's letter, Dalhousie wrote, “Bajirao has received pension for a long period of thirty three years. Thus, he has already received more than rupees two and a half crores. He has left property worth rupees 28 lakhs for his family members. According to law, his family members have no claim over his pension. Whatever wealth Bajirao has left behind is enough for maintenance of his family members.”

Nana Saheb was very much disappointed by this reply of Lord Dalhousie because he had maintained good relationship with Britishers from Bajirao's time. All British families of Kanpur, whenever they came to Bithur used to enjoy warm hospitality of Nana Saheb in his palace. Nana's elephants, horses and carriages were always ready for their service. Despite all this Dalhousie stopped pension soon after the death of Bajirao. Even then Nana Saheb maintained his poise and sent another letter to Dalhousie in which, referring to the pact with Company, it was requested to continue the pension. It was stated in the letter. “This miserly treatment by you with our famous Royal dynasty is wholly unjust. When you had received our extended state and its regime from Shrimant Bajirao, it was under an Agreement that you will be paying rupees eight lakhs per annum in lieu of that. If this pension is not for ever then how can our state, that was given to you for that pension, remain with you for ever? Violating one condition of the Agreement and expecting another to be applicable is improper.”

(with reference to Nana Saheb's claim against East-India Company).,,

After a flat refusal by Lord Dalhousie Nana Saheb wrote again: "The thing which is being said now that because you are an adopted son, you have no right and that Shrimant Bajirao has saved some amount from his pension and therefore there is no reason to continue the pension; if this is said by Company then it will be difficult to find another instance of this logic in history. This pension was given only as a condition of an agreement. Was there any provision in that condition as to how Bajirao would spend the pension amount? This pension was in lieu of a state given to the Company. Nobody in this world has a right to say as to how it is to be spent. Not only this, had Shrimant Bajirao saved the entire amount of pension, he was absolutely free to do so. I ask the Company a question, does it have a right to investigate as to how pension amounts of its employees are spent? Is it possible to ask even one's own servants as to how they have spent their pension amounts or how much they have saved out of it? The question that cannot be put even to servants is being asked of the head of a famous Royal family."

To expect this kind of thing from Dalhousie was akin to extract oil from sand. Still Nana Saheb did not spare any effort. He sent many applications to British Government. But it had no effect. Then, to challenge this decision of Dalhousie, he sent an application to the Board of Directors of the East India Company. He wrote— "When Peshwa Bajirao had handed over his state to Britishers, it was decided that a pension of rupees eight lakhs per annum will be granted for him and his family members. Bajirao has certainly passed away but his family is still there. It is improper not to recognise his successor son and other family members. At the time of taking over the state Britishers had taken the responsibility to bear his expenses. It is their duty to fulfil it. If Britishers have taken Peshwas' state on permanent basis then his pension should also be on a permanent basis. Descendants of Tipu Sultan are getting pension, then why should it be denied to Peshwa's family?"

The decision of the 'Board of Directors' poured cold water on Nana Saheb's hopes. It wrote to East India Company's Government— "The applicant may be informed that the pension of his adoptive father was not dynastic. Therefore, he has no right whatsoever, over it." Along with pension Jagirs of Bithur and Ramel were also taken back from Nana Saheb. Thus, he was now no more than an ordinary citizen.

Able Advisor

Now, Nana Saheb had only one alternative of sending some able person to England so that he could present Nana Saheb's case before the authorities there and get his pension back. For this, Nana Saheb chose a trusted and able man Ajimullah Khan.

Ajimullah Khan was born in Kanpur in an ordinary Muslim family. His father Najibulla used to work in an Englishman's house. One day that Englishman asked Najibulla to clean the stable of his horses. Najibulla refused to do this work. At that time Najibulla was working on the terrace of that Englishman's house. The Englishman pushed him so hard that he fell down. Bones of his hands and legs were broken. After that, the Englishman threw a brick towards him that hit his head. Blood streamed out. People carried him away. Ajimullah was seven years old then. Seeing this condition of his Abbu he was flustered. An ordinary Vaidya (an indigenous doctor) treated Najibulla for some days but the wounds were so deep that he could not survive. From that very moment, child Ajimullah hated not only the Englishman who had pushed his father to death but the entire British race. But powerlessness and helplessness are capable of making anyone do anything against his wishes. Ajimullah's mother Kariman Bi wanted to make her son a better human being by affording all help to him. Hence, she did household chores in people's homes. Still she taught Ajimullah that one day you will have to free this country from the clutches of these foreigners – killers of your father. To make ends meet, she had to work hard from morning till evening. Even then, she could hardly manage. Ajimullah stopped going to

madarsa. Due to penury Kariman Bi often took ill. Even then she continued to work. Ajimullah was just a boy but seeing his mother in this condition became too much for him. One day he went to his neighbour Manikchand's house. He was working in Magistrate's office. Ajimullah asked him to find a job for him. Manikchand got him a job with a British family. This Englishman Hillarsden was a kind and helpful officer. British-hater Ajimullah's helplessness had brought him to this place! Taking it as a play of fate Ajimullah accepted it but without forgetting the flame of patriotism that had kindled in him, he vowed to make himself capable of defeating his enemies when he grew into a man. Ajimullah worked whole day in Hillarsden's house and looked after his mother all night. Kariman Bi's condition deteriorated and one day she died too. What would the child Ajimullah do, who would he stay with? Eventually, Hillarsden family allowed him to stay with them.

Right from childhood, Ajimullah was very talented. Hillarsden was very much pleased with his talent and work, so he always encouraged him to study. Not only this, when he saw that Ajimullah wanted to study with his children he got him admitted to Kanpur's famous 'Free School'. Thus, Ajimullah acquired proficiency in English and French languages. Gradually, he not only became a member of Hillarsden's family but after growing up he was regarded as a much talked about and important personality of Kanpur's elite circles. He started teaching French in Kanpur itself.

Ajimullah Khan knew very well the ways to meet Englishmen, talk to them and getting work done from them. The talk of his erudition and good nature reached Bithur too. Many members of Nana Saheb's court were familiar with Ajimullah Khan's ability and personality. When Nana Saheb did not get a favourable response from Company government, he decided to go there and present his case personally before the government of England and owners of East India Company. But this was beyond Nana Saheb himself. He needed such an able man who could present his arguments effectively before authorities in England. And for this, his courtiers suggested the name of Ajimullah Khan. With

great respect and honour Nana Saheb invited Ajimullah Khan to Bithur and sent a horse carriage for him.

Ajimullah Khan was also keen to meet Nana Saheb. But both had suspicions too towards each other. Nana was thinking that a person who has been brought up in an English family, teaches in their school, would be more loyal to them. As such, would he be helpful to us? Likewise, Ajimullah Khan also thought that Nana Saheb entertains Englishmen, offers them gifts – what kind of politics was this! Even then, they met. Ajimullah Khan's personality was very impressive. He was soft-spoken. Nana Saheb was in his Royal splendour too. Both talked frankly.

It has been written about Ajimullah Khan – “Ajimullah Khan was not only learned, his way of talking was so polite and refined that Nana Saheb could not help being impressed by him. He found Ajimullah more accomplished than whatever he had heard about him. Ajimullah's knowledge of various subjects astonished him. For about three hours, Nana Saheb talked with him about home and abroad, society, politics and religion etc. The talks mostly centred around Britishers' diplomatic moves and their deceit. During these talks both clarified that till some time back each of them considered the other to be more loyal to Britishers. But this meeting removed this suspicion.” (*Krantidoot Ajimullah Khan*, Roopsingh Chandel, p. 29. Publications Division).

Ajimullah Khan started working both as Nana Saheb's Minister and Advisor. The main problem before Nana Saheb was his stopped pension. He asked Ajimullah Khan to go to London and plead for the restoration of his pension. At first instance Ajimullah Khan said Nana Saheb should himself present his case in London, but on Nana Saheb's insistence, he agreed to go alone. It is said that even the draft of Nana Saheb's appeal was prepared by Ajimullah Khan.

In his capacity of Nana Saheb's Advocate Ajimullah Khan reached London and there he argued vigorously before the Privy Council and the Directors of East India Company about the injustice

of stopping Nana Saheb's pension. But it seemed that top British authorities had already taken a decision. They said – "We wholly agree with the decision taken by the Governor-General. Therefore, Bajirao's adopted son has no right, whatsoever, over his pension."

Ajimullah Khan was greatly disappointed by this decision. On those very days, to appeal on behalf of Satara's deposed king one politician. Rango Bapuji was camping in London; he had also not met with success. Both Ajimullah Khan and Rango Bapuji met in London. In his book '*Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram*', Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes about this meeting – "At about same time, a worried looking Brahmin was sitting in a locality of London. He was pondering over how to get things done that could not be achieved through applications, requests and entreaties. Captured by a feeling of revenge born out of deep frustration, he was also thinking about various plans. He was Rango Bapuji of Satara. Peshwa's representative Ajimullah Khan had met him several times and they also deliberated secretly."

Like Savarkar, Sunderlal writes in his book, '*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj*' that there is little doubt that to a great extent, sitting in London's rooms Bapuji and Ajimullah Khan gave shape and substance to this national plan. Thereafter, with the intention of turning South Indian rulers in favour of this plan, Rango Bapuji came back to Satara and to assess the strength and position of Britishers among European countries and to gain assistance or sympathy of these countries in the future freedom struggle of India, clever Ajimullah Khan started visiting other countries of Europe. Then he reached Turkey. Those days England and Russia were engaged in a war. Ajimullah Khan heard that in a recent battle at Sebastepal, Russia had defeated Britishers. After getting this news, he reached Russia. Many British historians have expressed opinion that Ajimullah Khan had gone to Russia to strike a deal, on behalf of Nana Saheb, with Russia against the British. It is not known as to which countries Ajimullah visited after Russia but there is little doubt that Ajimullah Khan had tried to gain sympathy of Italy, Russia, Turkey, Egypt etc. in favour of

India's future freedom struggle. Sunderlal adds – "It is not known as to how far Ajimullah Khan's efforts had succeeded but two things are worth noting. One is that during the days of revolution there was general rumour within India that Nana Saheb has struck some kind of a deal with Russia's Tsar against the British. Second, that during the days when India was witnessing revolt, Italy's famous patriotic commander Garybaldi was, in order to help Indians, preparing to bring his forces and war material to India. Due to Italy's internal difficulties and revolts, Garybaldi could not set out in time. And just when Garybaldi was about to set out, after loading war material in his ships, for India, news came that India's revolution had subsided. With great regret, Garybaldi disembarked his forces."

Ajimullah's foreign travels were certainly important. It is another thing that he could not take full advantage of those journies. The vision with which Ajimullah Khan had travelled these countries of Europe etc. indicates clearly that there was plan of future revolution in his mind. Referring to historian Russel, Surendranath Sen has written, "In Constantinople Ajimullah Khan met the famous William Howard Russel. Russel has sketched this inquisitive Mohammedan in these words – "I had gone to Constantinople for some days. I was staying in an Egyptian hotel – I often used to see a lean, black, good looking young man in this hotel. That young man wore an oriental dress, which was new to me. Wearing rings in his fingers, finely attired this young man set out with splendour. He spoke French and English. As far as I understand, he was a ruler of some Indian princely state who, after presenting unsuccessfully a claim in London against the East India Company, was returning home." Ajimullah Khan tried to return to India via Kremia. He wanted to see the 'great Rustoms' and 'brave Russians' who had defeated simultaneously both French and British forces. From a distance he had seen Russian Artillery in operation too. Not giving importance to religious dictates, he had once told Russel– "I don't believe in these foolish things. I have no religion." Russel had said later – "Is it not curious to note that Ajimullah

Khan was keen to see for himself what was happening in Kremia. Such curiosity is common among Europeans but to find it in an Asian of a non-martial race was astonishing, indeed. He had seen British forces in a dejected state and, as I have heard, he had made, in relation to French armies, some negative notions about the courage and strength of British forces.”

Returning from his foreign tour, Ajimullah Khan went straight to Bithur. He narrated his experiences to Nana Saheb. Considering the overall situation Nana Saheb and all his courtiers concluded that Britishers can not now understand the language of applications and rules and regulations. There is only one way to make them understand – Revolution.

The way Ajimullah Khan had perceived this world, his opinion was that now we will have to take up arms. We will have to use the same weapons with which Britishers have threatened us. Nana Saheb had no other alternative now. Britishers had snatched away all his rights and taken back jagirs. For how long could he support people dependant on him with whatever money he was left with? He had fought for his pension upto London. Now he had to fight for survival. One of the many reasons why so much bitterness towards Britishers was created in Nana's heart was that he was not allowed even to use the seal of his departed father. For common people he was a legitimate heir of the Peshwa and his status could not enhance with the use of that seal but the Commissioner of Bithur, Moreland opposed it. Then Nana got another seal made in which he called himself Peshwa Bahadur. This new seal proved more annoying to Britishers and they prohibited its use too. In despair and under compulsion Nana had to make do with the title of 'Shriman Nana Dhondu Pant Bahadur' Nana was already dejected with the stoppage of his pension, now after loosing his title feelings of bitterness and rebellion started to grow in his heart.

اشتہار

ایک ساؤوارہ حال شہر کانپور جو کہ کلکتہ سے آیا تھا سانگیا کہ کار تو سون کی مٹی سی پہلی وسطی یعنی دین اور مذہب ہندوستان کو
 کوئل مٹی صاحبان کوئل کی پیدہ راسی تھی کہ چونکہ یہ قذوین کا ہی اسمین سات آٹھ ہزار گورہ وانگریز کام آؤسکا اور پچاس
 ہزار ہندوستانی قتل ہو گا تب کل ہندوستانی کرشناں ہونا و لگا چھ مہین کی عوضی ملکہ و کٹورہ کی خدمت میں پہنچی گئی اسی
 منظوری اسی پر دوبارہ کوئل ہوئی اور انگریزی سوداگری شریک کوئل کی گئی گئی یہ تجویز ہوا کہ وسطی و کی سیاہ گورہ اس قدر
 رحمت ہو کہ بقدر فوج ہندوستانی ہی کہ سیاہ اور وقت قصہ بلند ہونے کی بارخاؤں جب یہ عوضی لایست میں پڑی گئی
 دین سی ہے ہزار گورہ بہت جلدی چھاروں برسوں میں گورہ و ہندوستان ہوئی اور ان کی وائی کی خج کلکتہ میں آئی
 صاحبان کلکتہ نے واسطی اسی کار تو سون کی حکمرانی کیا کہ اصل مطلب اوس سی کرشناں کرنا فوج ہندوستانی کا تھا کہ
 جب فوج کرشناں ہونا دینی ہے عیالہ کی کرشناں کرنی میں دیر ہوگی اور کار تو سون پر شو و درگاہی کی چربی مٹی ہوئی تھی
 یہ حال بانی جنگالیوں کی جو کار تو سون بانی پر محض ہی معلوم ہوا پتا چھو اسات کی خاطر کرشناں اون سی ایک شخص جان سی
 مار ڈالا گیا اور باقی سب قید ہوئی یہاں پہلی سی تبیرین کرنی تھی وہاں یہ خبر وکیل سلطان و مہنی لندن سے اسی سلطان
 یاسن بھی کہ یہاں سی ہے ہزار گورہ واسطی کرشناں کرنی ہندوستانی روایت ہندوستان کی ہوئی سلطان و مہنی لندن ملک کی
 بادشاہی مصر کی نام فرمان ہی کیا خدا صد اسکا بد کی فوج گورہ سی تھی کشتی ہو وقت صلح کا نہیں کیونکہ ہماری فوج
 کی لکھنی سی معلوم ہو کہ وقت ہزار فوج گورہ واسطی کرشناں کرنی رہا بار اور اوج ہندوستانی روایت ہندوستان کو مٹی پس سہوڑ
 ایچی اسکا تارک ملکر ہے اگر وہ وقت کریشی تو خدا کو کیا سندہ دیکھا و مٹی اور چھ دن بکر و جاری ہی کی انہو الہی کیونکہ اگر انگریز
 ہندوستانیوں کو کرشناں کر لیں تو ہماری ملک بھی قصہ کریشی جب یہ فرمان سلطان و مہنی بادشاہی یاسن ہو سنا و الی مصر
 قبل ہو چکی فوج گورہ کی انتظام و اجتماع ہی فوج شہر سکندر میں کیا کیونکہ وہی لوگ ہندوستان کی ہی تھے جو پہنچی فوج گورہ
 کی فوج بادشاہ مصری چاروں طرف سی زمین ہزار شروع کین اور چھار و نکو ڈور مار کر ڈور یا کہ ایک گورہ ہی اون میں سے
 اپنی نڈا انگریزان کلکتہ بعد جاری کرنی حکمرانی کار تو سون کی اور ہندوستانی اس فوج و مساد کی منتظر و فوج لندن کی
 تھی کہ حق تعالیٰ نے اپنی قدرت کاملہ سی دین پہلی ہی اونکا کام تمام کیا جب خبر قتل ہوئی فوج لندن کی معلوم ہوئی تب
 گورہ زجر لے لی بہت رنج و غم کیا اور ایسا سر مٹا کہ سر شب سر قتل و تاراج و تہمت و سحر کہ نہ تن سر نہ سرتاج و تہمت
 ہیک گروش میں بیٹھ کر فری و نہ تار و بجا ماند و نی نادر ہی کہ حسب الحکم پیشوا بہادر علیج شہد سوز و غم و تہمت



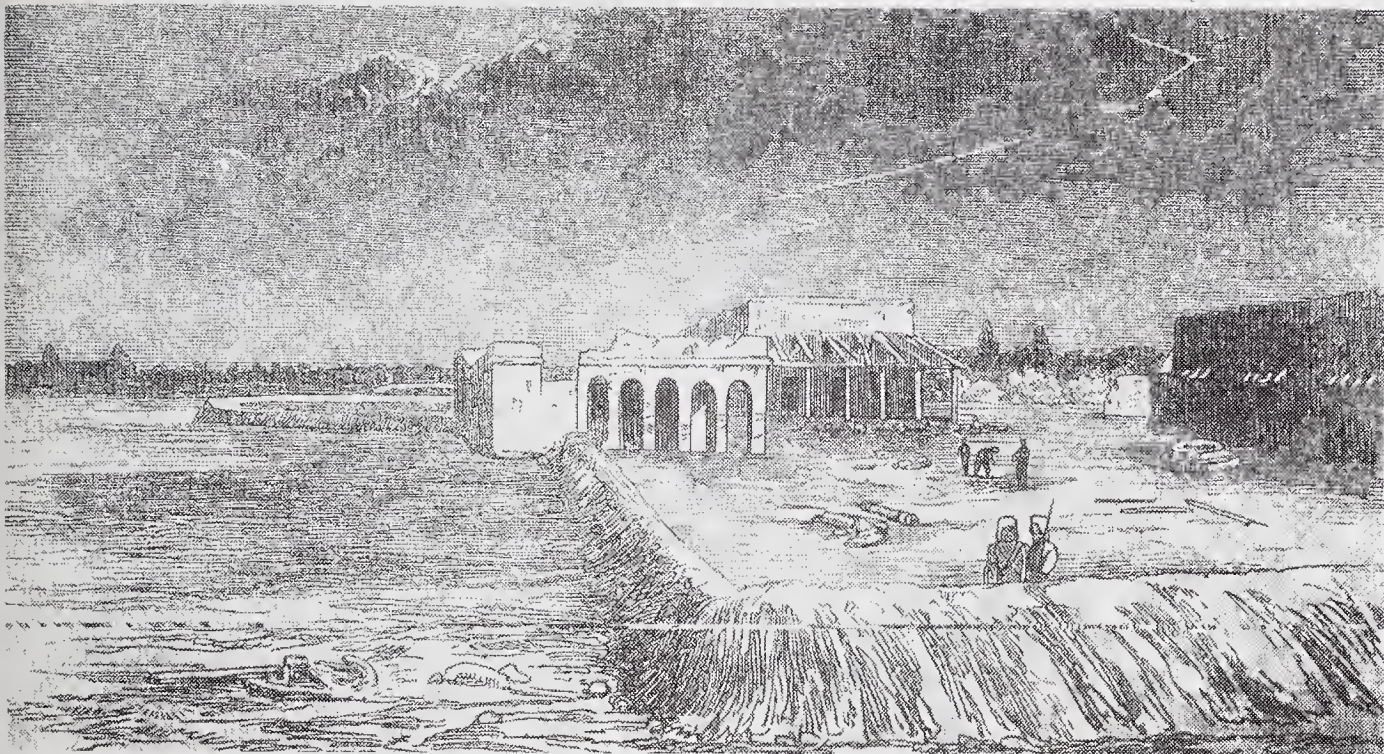
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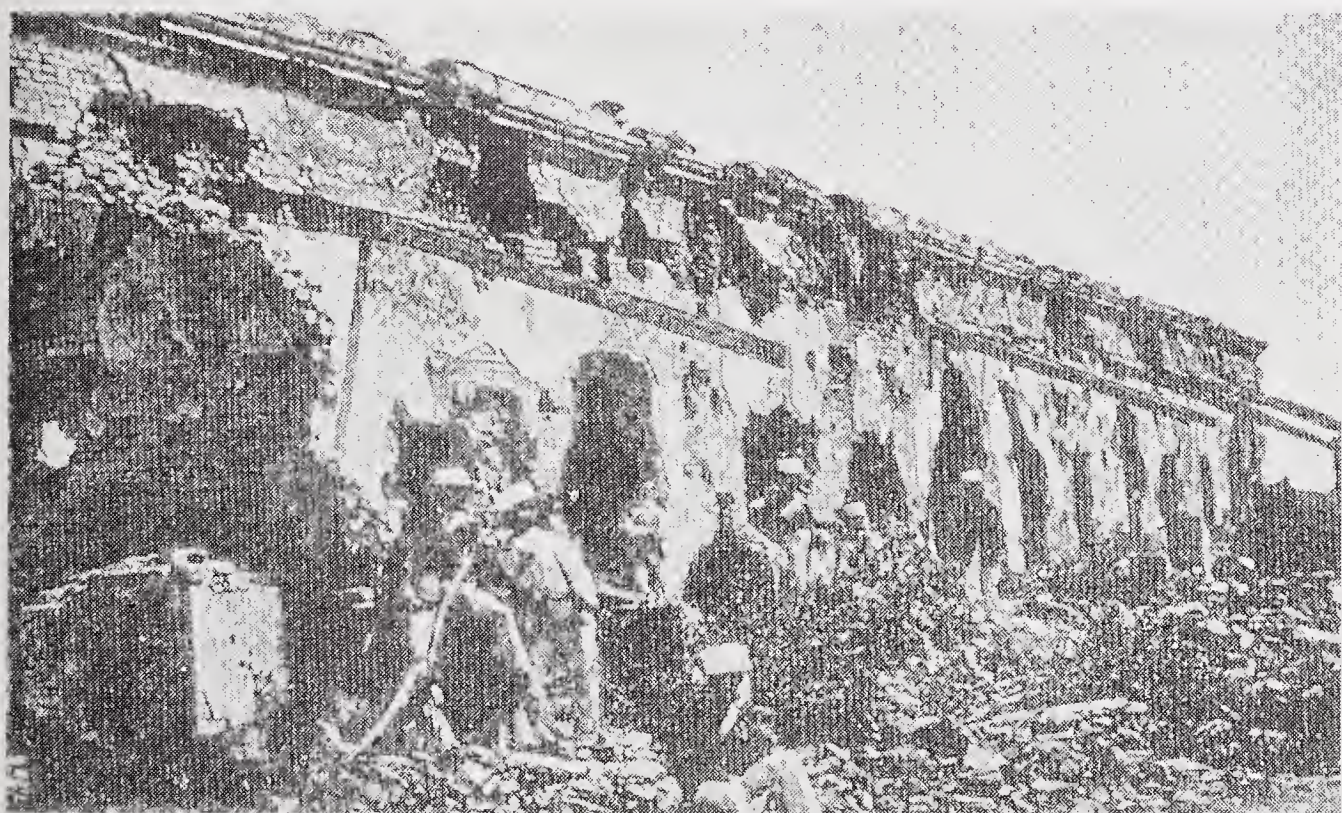
Azeemulla Khan



Tika Singh



Kanpur Fort under Company forces



Fort damaged by freedom fighters' shelling



Satichaura Ghat



Freedom fighters attack Kanpur

PLAN OF STRUGGLE

The Peshwa's seat, the loss of whose splendour had made Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa so sad and despairing, was no ordinary thing. The riches and Royal splendour of Nana Saheb was so great that British guests themselves marvelled after seeing it. Describing Nana's grandeur, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has written, "Brahmavart (Bithur) was a small but pompous city. Adjacent to the city was Bhagirathi's wharf. Enriched with beautiful wharfs many temples with visiting groups of men and women adorned with ornaments combined to make Brahmavart city and Bhagirathi's ghat so enchanting. Shrimant's enclosure was extensive and embellished with different things of tourists' attraction. Expensive and colourful mattresses and carpets were spread in public halls of the enclosure. Glass works of many hues made by European artisans, large mirrors, jewel-studded carving works in ivory and gold; in short, all beautiful things seen in Indian palaces were visible in the citizens' hall. He was very fond of horses and his knowledge about horses was talked about all over north India. His stable was always filled with trained horses of best breeds. He was also fond of rearing different breeds of deer, hunting dogs, antelopes, camels and all kinds of animals of India. Shrimant's armoury was very rich. There were various kinds of weapons, sharp-edged swords, brand new rifles and all kinds of guns in it. Shrimant was self-respecting by nature. In his applications nobility of descent has been mentioned repeatedly. Sometimes, European officers of army in Kanpur invited him but he never accepted such invitations because the Company was not ready to give him guard of honour by cannon befitting to his status. He loved very much people of his state. He was solemn by nature and his way of living simple. He was absolutely free of any kind of bad habits. A gentleman, who had met him several

times has written – “When I saw him, he was about 28 years of age but he looked to be around forty. He was heavily-built, round faced, his eyes fierce, bright and playful, fair complexion like Spanish people, of average stature and his talks were on the whole pleasant and humorous. In the court he wore a dress made of golden embroidered silk.” Seeing ornaments on his body and a very valuable crown on his head, British ladies heaved a sigh – thus wrote Travellion. In line with this grandeur, Nana’s behaviour was liberal and kind too. It was not surprising that he was kind to his subjects; but he remained kind to even those Britishers who played foul with him and ruined his life. For how many young English couples who expressed desire for an outing, Maharaj’s horse carriage was sent. On how many occasions British officers and others, along with their wives were invited to Maharaj’s house and were presented valuable gifts such as choice shawls, precious pearls, jewels etc.

“Shrimant Nana Saheb was thirsty for knowledge. He had keen interest in world politics and for that he bought many leading English newspapers. Everyday, as soon as newspapers arrived, he got them read for him. For this, he had appointed an Englishman, Mr Todd. Nana talked penetratively on politics of England and India.” (‘Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram.’ p./45-47).

Wave of Dissatisfaction

Due to the case of restoration of Nana Saheb’s pension not being settled there was widespread dissatisfaction in his as well as his loyalists’ hearts. This was the time when dissatisfaction against Britishers’ rule was spreading all over India and that in a way was paving the way of revolution. In the eyes of historians, this dissatisfaction was due to five main reasons:

- (1) Continuous maltreatment of Delhi’s ruler by Britishers.
- (2) Atrocities against Nawab and people of Awadh.
- (3) Dalhousie’s policy to usurp indigenous states.
- (4) Company’s injustice with Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the last Peshwa Bajirao; and

- (5) Move to proselytize Indians and propagation of Christian doctrine in the Army. It will be advisable to know these reasons in brief.
- (1) The Emperor of Hindustan and well-wishers of India had their first doubt on intentions of Britishers when Lord Wellesley proposed that Badshah Shah Alam and his court may be shifted from Red Fort in Delhi to the fort of Munger. As soon as old Shah Alam heard it, he became angry and denounced any such proposal openly and rejected it. Wellesley withdrew his proposal immediately but this proposal made Indian well-wishers suspicious. Historians write – “In a way, this was the sowing of seed of 1857 revolt in Delhi.” (‘Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj’ Sunderlal, p./807). In 1806 Shah Alam died. After him Akbar Shah occupied Delhi’s throne. But Britishers started behaving shabbily with him. In 1837 Akbar Shah died and then Bahadurshah Zafar occupied the throne. Britishers tried to trouble him too in many ways. Britishers took measures to weaken Bahadurshah in every way and brought him into a worse position. This is revealed by this letter of Resident Commissioner, Delhi addressed to Governor General – “Glitter of outward splendour of the emperor was not as before and those rights of him of which descendants of Taimur were proud of have been snatched away one by one. Therefore, after death of Bahadurshah, it is not at all difficult to end the title of ‘Badshah’ with just one dipping of a pen. The customary payment made by Governor General and Commander-in-Chief to the emperor was stopped. Company’s coin, that was minted in the name of emperor was also made out of circulation. In Governor General’s seal the words ‘Badshah ka fidvi-e-Khas’ (Special servant of the emperor) were removed and India’s men of status were instructed not to use such words in relation to the emperor in their seals. After doing all this, British government decided that nothing of such appearances should remain that suggest Emperor’s supremacy over our government.

Therefore, the title of 'Badshah' of Delhi is such a title whose continuance depends on the will of our government." In this way Bahadurshah was conspired against. One of his eight princes, Mirza Qoyash was brought to Britishers' side on false promises and a deal containing three conditions was struck with him and Bahadurshah informed accordingly. These conditions were – "You will be called 'Shahzada' (Prince) instead of 'Badshah' (Emperor); you will have to vacate Delhi's Fort and you will be getting a monthly amount of rupees fifteen thousand only instead of the present rupees one lakh per month for your expenses. When people of Delhi came to know of this trick of Britishers, they became very angry for the grave injustice done to their Badshah. They started thinking about a revolution to free the country from clutches of Britishers.

- (2) The way Nawab of Awadh, Wajidali Shah was vilified, was painted a voluptuous person through false propaganda, books against his rule got written and distributed and finally he was arrested and taken to Calcutta – all this made people of Awadh very angry with Britishers. It is worth noting that most big land owners under a muslim Nawab were Hindus. Paternal land holdings of these countless Zamindars were snatched away for no reason and many of them were reduced to penury. Historian John K. writes that very few old Zamindars could be able to avoid this injustice. History tells us that lakhs of peasants of Awadh wept after hearing about the sufferings of Wajidali Shah and his relatives and thousands of villagers met their homeless Zamindars and expressed sympathy with them. Most of Indian soldiers of Company's forces were taken from Awadh region. Therefore, Lord Dalhousie's atrocities on people of Awadh had sown seeds of deep dissatisfaction in entire Awadh and Company's force.
- (3) Dalhousie's policy of usurping princely states was the third reason of people's ire against Britishers. The way Britishers

had unjustly usurped princely states, people were very angry. Historian Ludlo has written – “Undoubtedly the way princely states were merged into British rule, had feelings of people not flared up against Britishers, Indians would have been regarded as disgraced people. No doubt, there would not be a single woman who has not become our enemy because of usurpation of these states; there would not be a single child who is not being taught of hate the foreign rule because of such acts of ours.”

- (4) Fourth reason was injustice done by the Company to the adopted son of Bajirao Peshwa, Nana Saheb. Sir John K., Charles Ball, Travellion and Martyn – all four famous British historians admit that justice was on Nana’s side. Result was that from then onwards Nana Saheb hated Britishers and started thinking about ways to free himself and his country from the clutches to Britishers.
- (5) Fifth reason was attempts to proselytize Indians. One British scholar Reverend Kennedy has written – “Whatever adversities we may have to face, as long as we rule India we must not forget that our main purpose is to spread the Christian doctrine in this country. We must make whatever efforts we can, towards this end and whatever rights and powers we have in ours hands must be utilized for this.”

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes, “It was a changed atmosphere in royal palace of Brahmavart (Bithur) after the return from foreign tour of Ajimullah Khan. That ‘Jari-Patka’ flag of Peshwas that waved in celebration of victory over entire Hindustan was eating dust lying in the royal palace. The large drum (Dundhubi), sound of which made lakhs of Marathi swords attack their enemies in battlefield, had started producing sad tunes instead of valour-rousing tunes. The royal currency too, on minting of which Delhi’s happenings depended, was sobbing on its decline. But as soon as Ajimullah Khan returned from abroad it seemed as if these things got a new lease of life. Dust-covered ‘Jari

Patka' again started glittering and those bright, playful and fierce eyes of Nana Saheb showed more than the feeling of revenge born out of unbearable humiliation – the thrill of an impending war.”

Plan of Revolution

After coming back to Bithur Ajimullah Khan, on the basis of his experiences in foreign countries, brought home to Nana Saheb that Britishers will not understand the language of applications. They are obsessed with the establishment and expansion of British empire. Whatever success they have achieved so far is due to our mutual dissension, lack of unity and through treachery of our own people. Therefore, we will have to come together now and after raising a big organisation, drive them out of this country and get back our lost glory. Ajimullah Khan and Nana Saheb deliberated on the possibilities and method of operation of this whole plan for a long time. Later, leaders of the army like Tatya Tope and Jwalaprasad also joined these deliberations. It was concluded in meetings of the first round that this revolution should take place at the same time in the entire country. It was suggested by Ajimullah Khan that it would be imperative to appoint a leader of the revolution, under whose leadership both Hindus and Muslims could be organised. Nana Saheb suggested that we will make Bahadurshah Zafar our leader so that all could organise under his flag. Although it is true that he has grown old; he has neither money nor forces. But everyone respects him and his leadership will be acceptable to all. The main point of planners of revolution was that all Indians, uniting under the flag of Emperor Bahadurshah Zafar, should drive Britishers out of the country and then manage to give good administration to people in a new set up under the flag of the Emperor. Making Mughal Emperor the leader of revolution certainly indicates Nana Saheb's political acumen and farsightedness. After this, he was committed fully for propagation of and giving a concrete shape to the revolution.

It was necessary to have a large secret organisation to launch such a big countrywide revolution. Apart from propagating the revolution, this organisation was to take up responsibilities such as arming people and incite feelings of revolt in cantonments. Clearly it was necessary to create this organisation and then to open its branches at various places. Not only this organisation was to remain secret but the process of its formation and its method of working also were to be kept secret so that Britishers had no clue about it. Therefore, all these things were to be operated from Bithur. In fact, it was an important aspect of the plan of revolution.

From whatever information we may get from mostly Britishers' books, it transpires that some time before 1856 Nana Saheb, sitting in Bithur, had started sending his secret agents and propagators all over India. Special envoys of Nana reached the courts of all kings from Delhi to Mysore and propagators set out to awaken all indigenous forces of the Company and general public. The secret letters that Nana Saheb wrote at this time to Indian kings indicated how Britishers, by usurping one princely state after another, were trying to subjugate whole of India. After a while, Britishers caught an envoy of Nana, who was carrying Nana's letter addressed to the court of Mysore. Britishers came to know from this envoy that Nana Saheb had already sent many such letters to various kings. Historian Sir John K. writes – "For months, rather years, these people were spreading the net of conspiracies all over India. Nana Saheb's envoys had moved with letters from one Indian ruler to another at the other end. In these letters rulers belonging to different religions and chieftains were advised skilfully and were invited in perhaps some code language to take part in the ensuing war." (*"Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj"*: Sunderlal, p./821-822).

For the cause of revolution these letters from Nana Saheb were first sent to those rulers who were aggrieved with Britishers for some reason. In these letters, Britishers were proved to be strong

enemies of the country, religion and culture. Besides, kings were advised to join armed struggle against Britishers. In fact, for success of the plan Nana Saheb had established three departments—one was under Baba Bhatt. He was an able and learned politician. Baba Bhatt was handling the work of correspondence with indigenous kings. The work of propagation in cantonments of Indian regiments of British forces was given to Jwalaprasad. Third department was for propagation among general public, which was placed under Ajimullah Khan. Head of all three departments was Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa. Tatya Tope was his Advisor.

In the book *'Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram'* (p./69), Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes – “Calling whole of India to rise for freedom struggle, Nana Saheb’s envoys and his letters were making rounds from Kolhapur, all Patwardhani states of the south to landlords of Ayodhya (Awadh) and all capitals from Delhi to Mysore. How self-rule and our religious beliefs are being messed up under the British rule, how the princely states which are surviving now are going to remain in name only tomorrow and how our most beloved Hindustan is suffering under yoke of their slavery – bringing all this out clearly and touchingly, Maulvis, Pandits and political ascetics started moving secretly all over the country. When we, all lovers of this country, will unite we can free our mother land in a moment by making these few Britishers lick dust - how these political ascetics had created such self-confidence in every soldier and every citizen becomes apparent from the utterances of patriots of that period.... The letters signed by Shrimant Nana Saheb himself and ascetics sent from Brahmavart sowed seeds of great self confidence in Indians. But the information as available now, suggests that till the taking over of Ayodhya (Awadh) state these seeds had not germinated in a big way.”

Another historian has also written that. “In the beginning there was no effect of these letters but incidentally Britishers

merged the state of Awadh also in the Company's rule in 1856. This incident stirred people's emotions in favour of revolution. Indigenous kings realised the truth behind Nana Saheb's appeal. Bahadurshah Zafar, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Kunwar Singh of Bihar and others agreed to participate actively in the revolution. All of them joined in their respective areas in the efforts to make revolution a success.

Blazing Flame in the Whole Country

The revolution that was planned in Bithur gradually started to take practical shape and meaning. The incident of annexing Awadh to Company's rule helped much to give meaningful dimensions to the revolutionary plan of Nana Saheb. Sir John K. writes: "Usurpation of this last state had so much effect that people started asking each other as to who could be safe now? If British government could snatch away the state of their most loyal and helpful friend like the Nawab of Awadh, who had helped Britishers when they needed it, then what was the benefit of being loyal to them? It is said that the kings and nawabs who had till then kept back from participating in the revolution, now started coming forward and Nana Saheb started getting favourable responses to his letters.

Secret Organisation and Centres of Revolution

Ajimullah Khan, Tatya Tope, Jwalaprasad and Nana Saheb prepared a giant, but secret organisation for the revolution in Bithur. It seems that foundation of this secret organisation was laid in Bithur itself. Even many British historians have profusely praised the ability of sponsors and operators of the revolution. In his book 'Western India', a British writer Sir George Lee Grand Jacob writes, "The amazingly secret manner in which the whole conspiracy was implemented, the foresight that was used while planning, the utmost care with which various groups of this organisation worked with each other that one could have no inkling of men belonging to other groups and they were given only that much information which was absolutely necessary for them – all this is difficult to describe. And they showed amazing loyalty towards each other.

It is also written that for this giant organisation there was no dearth of money. Thousands of rich men and money-lenders had placed their money bags on feet of national leaders. Thousands of patriots from Barrackpur to Peshawar and from Lucknow to Satara, in the guise of faquirs and ascetics, were busy propagating the struggle for freedom in every village and every regiment of the British army. Thousands of Pandits and thousands of Moulvis were praying for success of the revolution. Headquarter of the organisation of this revolution was Bithur from where Nana Saheb, through his letters, envoys and messages and Ajimullah Khan, through his disguised propagators were sending the message of revolution to every section of population and every corner of the country. But along with this, centres of revolution were also established in Delhi, Lucknow, Calcutta and Satara. It is said that emperor Bahadurshah Zafar and his able Begum Zeenat Mahal and her advisers had decided to give full support to the country and Nana Saheb in this revolution. On the other side, in Calcutta the Minister of Wajidali, Ali Naqi Khan raised a secret organisation and operated it from there itself. Ali Naqi Khan sent his spies to all indigenous forces of north India in guise of Muslim Faquirs – Sadhus and started correspondence with Indian officers of those forces.

In Lucknow Begum Hazrat Mahal publicised the revolution widely and started preparing numerous men among the gentry and common people for the revolution. In Satara Rango Bapuji was making efforts to make the plan of revolution a success. In princely states and court of Kolhapur the net of a revolutionary war was being woven. In January 1857, the following manifesto was published – “O, lovers of this country and devout people, rise! All of you rise to drive out these unbelieving Englishmen! These Britishers have ruined all principles of justice. They have plundered our independence and they are intent to ruin our motherland. Now only one way has remained to free India from these terrible tortures of Britishers and that is to wage a tumultuous war with them. In such a war, those who die in the battlefield,

will be martyrs for their country. Gates of heaven are opening for those who will fight and die for their country and their religion and for those mean, coward and treacherous people who turn away from this national duty, doors of hell will remain open. What will be your choice, O' lovers of the country?" (*Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram*: Reference – 'Mutiny' Part I. p./40, Author - Charles Ball)

Enquiring into the conditions then prevailing, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has written, "As soon as the state of Ayodhya (Awadh) was taken over, all people suddenly felt contempt for their subjugation. Sharp eyes of Nana Saheb had already seen the charming and auspicious sight of independence and foul smell of the dirt of slavery had reached him from a distance.... With the taking over of Ayodhya (Awadh) everyone cursed his existence. At the same time it seemed as if the historically famous capital of Hindustan, Delhi had also become alive and consultations with regard to freedom struggle started taking place in the palaces of Delhi. Britishers did not stop at snatching away the empire of Delhi's emperor but they decided that the title of 'Emperor' should not continue to be used after him. At this very time Britishers started fighting with Iran. Realising that a revolt taking place in Hindustan at the same time was advantageous to him, the Shah of Iran wrote in 1856 to the emperor of Delhi promising his help. Not only this, in the beginning of 1857, announcements like this were made from the mosques of Delhi – "To free India from the clutches of foreigners Iranian forces are coming soon; therefore all people, be they old or young, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, militarymen or civilians should jump into fray to become free from the clutches of these unbelievers." (Reference: '*Indian Mutiny*' by Sir John K.)

Savarkar continues, "Secret centres of this organisation were spread out now at all places. This secret organisation was certainly growing rapidly in the royal palace of Bithur, where it had taken roots but the letters of Shrimant Nana Saheb and Ajimullah Khan and their propagators had caused to open branches of this

organisation at thousands of places. Residence of Nana in Bithur looked busy in preparation of the next auspicious work; Delhi's Palace bustled too in the same manner. This side, in Lucknow and Agra, patriotic Moulvi Ahmedshah had built up a furious centre of crusade for the freedom struggle. In Patna city, seeds of this crusade had penetrated so deep that the entire city looked like a fortress of some revolutionary group. People of all persuasions and professions, Moulvi, Pandit, landowners, farmers, traders, advocates, students were ready to strike after being consecrated to give up life for the sake of their religion, their country." (*Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram*, p.76).

The above mentioned Maulvi Ahmedshah was a landlord of Faizabad and he had wandered all over Awadh to enlist support of thousands of people and had administered oath to them for joining the revolution. Maulvi Ahmedshah's personality and speech both were so effective that more than ten thousand people attended his meetings and left only after taking oath that they would stake their lives in the coming freedom struggle.

How wide and deep was the effect of propagators can be guessed from the fact that policemen in most Police stations, many government servants and even cooks and water carriers of Englishmen were involved in the plan of revolution. At some places these propagators were caught but nothing could be got revealed from them. Sir John K. writes that once a Faqir, camping near Meerut cantonment was propagating about revolution. He had elephants, horses and many other things. When Britishers suspected him, he was driven out of the borders of cantonment. That Faqir went to a village nearby on his elephant and continued his activities from there. These political Faqirs were often provided with elephants to ride and armed guards for their protection. It is said that Tamasha (a folk satirical drama), Panwars (encomiums), Lavnis (a folk dance), puppet shows, Nautankies (a variation of comic drama) etc. were also used extensively for propagation of revolution.

Symbols of Revolution

Britishers had no clue about the strong and secret organisation raised under the leadership of Nana Saheb. The reason for this was that such methods were evolved and people were trained in such ways for propagation and conveying the message that there was no reason to suspect them. For example, people coming to Prayag for a holy dip were getting messages of revolution through Pandits and religious preachers.

The first symbol of revolution was lotus flower. This flower was moved only in those indigenous regiments that had already given their secret approval to join the plan of revolution. The procedure was that a soldier of one regiment would go with the flower to another regiment. In the regiment the flower was passed from hand to hand. The soldier who received the flower at last had the duty to take it to another regiment. The secret meaning of this was that all soldiers of that regiment were ready to participate in the revolution. Thus, lotus flowers numbering thousands, lakhs were moved in regiments from Peshawar to Barrackpur.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar has written about this symbol of revolution, 'Lotus': "Thus, without uttering a single word, that envoy of revolution moved forward like an arrow and finding another unit, handed the red lotus over to its Head. Thus, this lotus organisation was filled with one blood-red idea..."

"Lotus flower! The poetic symbol of purity, glory and light, that is recognised by poets! And its colour! Blood red! A mere touch of that flower may cause one's heart-flower to blossom – such is its liveliness! When that Lotus flower would have been passed from one hand to the other of hundreds of soldiers, it is certain that much deeper meaning than the tacit message vested in it along with vigour of that sublime goal would have been conveyed by it. Due to that red lotus all hearts got united indeed because soldiers and farmers both were heard saying – 'Everything will be red. Now everything is going to be red.'... Letters written by one soldier to another were also on the same pattern. But

letters of the leaders of this organisation were very important, hence those were written very carefully.” (Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram: p./78).

The second symbol of revolution was ‘roti’ (a bread-cake). This was also a well thought out and meaningful symbol conveying message of revolution to common people. After seeing roties being distributed, it was impossible for Britishers even to guess about the impending revolution. This was such an expedient of conveying message on which nothing was written – still it was a symbol of the great revolution. It is said that the guard of one village used to take rotis to the guard of another village. It was obligatory for the guard receiving the rotis to eat a piece of it and to distribute the remaining rotis among other villagers. Then this guard would get chapatis made of wheat or any other available grain flour and send them to the guard of a nearby village. This meant that people of the village sending rotis are prepared to participate in freedom struggle. Historians write that it seems miraculous that in a few months only these... ordinary chapatis reached lakhs of villages from this end to that in a large country like India. Undoubtedly, for soldiers red lotus and for common people, roti – both were profoundly meaningful symbols.

Commenting on the symbol of roti, Savarkar has written, “In the beginning of 1857 these Angels with secret wings had started travelling all over Hindustan conveying news of the future auspicious event. Nobody could guess where they came from or where would they go.... Every village-head received those rotis. He would eat a piece of a roti and distribute the rest to all villagers as prasad. The people of that village prepared same number of chapatis and got those sent to a neighbouring village.” (Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram : p./81)

Nana Saheb’s Pilgrimage

Secret organisations having been established and other arrangements made for the revolution, it was now necessary that all these

efforts were coordinated and a date fixed to start action on the same day all over India. As everything was being done with utmost secrecy, in order to travel to all places Nana Saheb had to go out on the pretext of pilgrimage. Ajimullah Khan, Tatya Tope and Jwala Prasad had also joined this pilgrimage of him. Nana Saheb's brother Bala Saheb was also with them. No historian has written about the places Nana Saheb visited, people he talked to in matters of revolution etc. – because it was not desirable that those things got undue publicity. Had this happened, all plans would have collapsed. The accounts of British historians and documents relating to freedom struggle contain things based only on hearsay regarding Nana Saheb's talks with people during this journey. During the course of this journey first of all Nana Saheb reached Delhi. They had secret consultations with emperor Bahadurshah, Begum Zeenat Mahal and prominent leaders of Delhi in Diwan-e-Khas of the Red Fort. After this Nana Saheb went to Ambala and other places. Russell writes that during this journey Nana and Ajimullah Khan visited all British cantonments on way. On 18th April 1857 Nana Saheb and his associates reached Lucknow. In Lucknow Nana Saheb was taken out in a procession with great pomp and was honoured. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar writes about the grand reception given to Nana Saheb in Lucknow – “On the same day people running behind the horse carriage of the Chief Commissioner of Lucknow, Sir Henry Lawrence had thrown mud cakes on it, to show the way how to throw more effective laddus (round cakes) soon, Nana Saheb's cavalcade had come there. What followed then? Now, there was no limit to enthusiasm and courage of Lucknow city. This vast cavalcade of Nana passed through main roads of Lucknow and seeing this future warrior of freedom all revolutionaries became animated. Nana himself had gone to Sir Henry Lawrence's house and had told him that they had come to Lucknow just for sight seeing.... In the same month Nana had gone to the city of Kalpi. Nana met the brave man Babu Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur who had astonished the whole world by his patriotism and military tactics;

he gave final touches on the spot to the plan of movement in his state (Bihar) to make Nana's plan a success. Thus, after meeting prominent leaders in Delhi, Lucknow, Kalpi, Jagdishpur etc. and finalising the plan of future revolution in consultation with them, Nana Saheb returned to Bithur at the end of April." (Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram : p./80).

One historian writes that during this journey of Nana Saheb it was decided in Lucknow that revolution be started on 31st May 1857 all over India and 'universe of God, country of emperor and administration of local ruler' be announced. The flag of revolution was decided to be of green colour. The plan was that with the blowing of conch shell of revolution revolutionary soldiers would set prisoners free after breaking jails and turn them to their side. After plundering treasuries of Britishers they would set out towards Delhi.

Thus, the plan of revolution prepared by Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa in Bithur in consultation with his associates Ajimullah Khan, Tatya Tope and Jwala Prasad had already been publicised all over the country. In fact, people were looking forward to this day of 31st May. Such was the passion and enthusiasm among people that they were eager to do anything any moment. Nana, Tatya etc., all had seen this and they had made a note of it. Seeing this restlessness, Tatya Tope had apprehension that something may not happen before the fixed date, 31st May 1857 – because in that case revolution would not be as fruitful as when it was started on the fixed date, in an organised way. Tatya Tope had shared this apprehension with Nana Saheb and Ajimullah Khan too. But it was not easy to control the plan of revolution extended over such a vast country. This fear troubled the leaders even more with the incident of martyrdom of Mangal Pande.

The Revolution Erupts

Success of the plan of revolution prepared by Nana Saheb and his associates depended on its explosion on the fixed date and time. But this could not be – perhaps because though such a big plan in such a vast country was prepared efficiently but it was also apprehended that a small spark might blow it into flame before time and thus weaken its force – and this was what happened. In January 1857 in a village called Damdam near Calcutta suddenly a small incident took place that started the 1857 revolution before time. When Nana Saheb and his associates came to know about it, they were certainly alarmed but they had no alternative but to remain quiet and wait for the appointed date 31st May. Hence, they observed carefully what had happened and deliberated on its likely consequences in long run.

Some pro-British historians may have tried to negate the authenticity of this incident but the truth is that the suet-covered cartridges had played an important role in inflaming the revolution before time. Actually, what had happened was that Company government issued new type of cartridges to the Indian Army in 1853. Earlier type of cartridges had to be broken by hands but this new type of cartridges had to be cut by teeth. Just this thing became the reason for revolt against these cartridges. What was said was that these cartridges were wrapped by material made of tallow of cow and pig that hurt religious feelings of Hindus and Muslims.

A factory to manufacture this type of cartridges was opened near Barrackpur. Pandit Sunderlal has written, “One day a Brahmin soldier of Damdam, carrying a small water pot in hand, was going towards Barrack. Suddenly a sweeper came there and asked him to give his pot so that he could drink water. According to Hindu

custom the soldier refused to give him the pot. On this, sweeper said – “Now forsake this pride of caste etc. Don’t you know that you will have to cut cow meat and tallow of pig with your teeth soon. In the new cartridges being made now, these two things are added deliberately.” Hearing this, the enraged Brahmin soldier went to cantonment. When other soldiers heard this news, they too became angry. They thought that British government deliberately wanted to pollute their religion. They inquired about truth in this matter from their British officers. Officers replied that this rumour was totally untrue and there was nothing of that kind in the new cartridges. Soldiers did not believe it. They made inquiries from Indian labourers working in the Barrackpur factory. They said that it was true that in these new cartridges both these things, which are prohibited in both Hindu religion and Islam, are added. Thus, after satisfying themselves, soldiers of Barrackpur spread this news all over India.” (*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj* : Sunderlal, p.827).

New cartridges are coated with tallow of cow and pig – truthfulness of this was also checked by British historians. Sir John K., who is regarded as the most authentic historian of 1857 revolution has written that, “There is no doubt that in making this greasy material tallow of cow was used.” He has also written that in the month of December of 1853, Colonel Tucker had written clearly that tallow of cow and pig was used in making new cartridges. It was clearly mentioned in the contract documents of the contractor who was to supply tallow in Damdam factory that he will supply cow tallow at the rate of four annas per *ser*. Likewise, in the book ‘Forty Years in India,’ Lord Roberts has written, “Mr. Forest has recently examined the documents of Government of India. This examination has proved that the greasy material that was used in making cartridges was indeed prepared by mixing both the prohibited substances i.e. tallow of both cow and pig. And in making those cartridges such insensitivity was shown towards religious feelings of soldiers that is unbelievable.”

There are differences of opinion among historians as to effects of this incident of using suet in cartridges. Some of them believe that that was the only or main reason of 1857 revolution whereas others say that the plan of revolution had already been prepared and Nana Saheb had done it efficiently but the incident of tallow worked as a spark to pile of gunpowder. In this respect Justice Macarthy has written in his book, 'History of our own Times,' "The truth is that it was a revolt against British rule by native people in most parts of northern and western India.... The matter regarding tallow cartridges was merely a spark that had fallen on all this explosive material.... That war was a nationalist and religious war. In his memoirs of his tour of India during the period March 1857 to March 1858, another historian Midley has written, "But, due to various reasons what explosive material was, in fact, being prepared for a long time below the surface, the tallow-coated cartridges acted merely as a matchstick to ignite it."

Mangal Pande's Revolt

Although soldiers were full of rage due to the matter relating to use of tallow cartridges, Indian Army officers advised them to remain quiet till 31st May. On Revolution getting flared up before time for any reason, it was not possible for Nana Saheb or any other prominent leader to control it and in fact, it was this that happened. At the time Nana Saheb was organising revolution during his tour of north India and was propagating that it must begin on the appointed day, signs of revolution being flared up before time in Damdam-Barrackpur were becoming visible.

In February 1857 some new cartridges were given for use to the 19th Regiment of Barrackpur. Soldiers flatly refused to use those cartridges. With intention to penalise and to teach a lesson to soldiers of this regiment, Britishers decided to get their weapons surrendered. But that was possible only in case some British regiment was present there to implement this decision. At that time there was no British regiment in the entire Bengal, so officers immediately summoned a white regiment from Burma (now

Myanmar). When soldiers came to know that British officers have summoned a white regiment to penalise them by dismissal orders, they decided to begin the evolution instead of quietly putting in their arms. But their Indian officers asked them to remain quiet till the 31st May. Despite this, one young soldier of this regiment could not control his anger. On 29th March 1857, when this regiment was made to stand in the Parade ground, Mangal Pande jumped out and facing other soldiers with his loaded gun and shouting loudly gave them a call to begin a war with Britishers to defend their religion. The sergeant on duty there ordered that Mangal Pande be caught and imprisoned. But no soldier moved an inch from his place. In a moment, Mangal Pande quickly positioned his gun and shot at Sergeant Major Hewson. He fell from horse and died. By then, another officer Lieutenant Vaugh came there rapidly on his horse. Mangal Pande fired at him too. Lieutenant Vaugh and his horse got injured and fell down. Mangal Pande quickly reloaded his gun and wanted to fire for the third time, but by then Lt. Vaugh had got up and he fired at Mangal Pande with his pistol. The bullet missed him. By then Vaugh had come close to him. Mangal Pande drew his sword and he finished Vaugh right there. A little later Colonel Wheeler came there and ordered soldiers to arrest Mangal Pande but no one obeyed his order. In the meantime General Heyer came there with some white soldiers. Seeing him, Mangal Pande shot at his own chest. An injured Pande fell down. White soldiers immediately arrested him. He was taken to hospital and given treatment. Then he was court martialled. He was sentenced to death by hanging. Mangal Pande was hanged in the morning of 8th April 1857. After that, soldiers of 19th and 34th indigenous regiments were made to put their arms down and they were dismissed. Still the leaders of both these regiments took care of the orders of leaders of revolution and held back any rebellious action till 31st May. In the instructions to initiate revolution, it was already provided that before the commencement of revolution Bungalows and Barracks of Britishers at all places will be set on

fire. In reaction to the incident of hanging of Mangal Pande there were sporadic incidents of arson in Merath, Lucknow, Ambala etc. but the police, which was secretly supporting the freedom struggle did not allow those incidents to become important lest Britishers got some clue about the revolution.

Referring to historian Sir John K. it has been written that on 6th May 1857, 90 Indian troopers were tentatively given those new tallow cartridges in Meerut. The troopers were ordered to use those cartridges after cutting them with those teeth. But 85 of these 90 troopers flatly refused to cut those cartridges with their teeth. On the crime of disobeying these soldiers were court martialled and all of them were awarded rigorous imprisonment for 8 to 10 years. On 9th May 1857 these 85 soldiers were made to stand on Parade Maidan. In front of them was the Artillery of white forces. Remaining Indian soldiers of the cantonment were also called there to enable them to see the spectacle. Those 85 convicts were made to remove their uniforms and they were fastened with handcuffs and fetters. They were told that they were awarded 10 years imprisonment. After that they were sent to jail in fetters. Thousands of their colleagues, who regarded them to be innocent were seething with rage but they had orders to remain quiet for another three weeks. They controlled their anger and returned to barracks. ('Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj' : p./832).

Revolution in Meerut

Up till this time soldiers of Meerut had shown utmost restraint and in deference to instructions given by leaders of revolution they had decided not to do anything till 31st May. What they saw on 9th May was beyond their tolerance; still as if their lips were stitched and they had checked a storm within their hearts.

It was evening time on the 9st May 1857. Soldiers of Indian regiments came to Meerut markets and they were wandering about. Seeing them, women in market told them, "Your brothers are in prison there and here you are just whiling your time.

Shame on your being alive.” Referring to historian J.C. Wilson and ‘Red Pamphlet’. Savarkar has written that, “How could already enraged soldiers tolerate that ordinary women spat on their life like this? That night secret meetings of soldiers took place in the entire line (of barracks). Shall we still wait for the 31st May? There our brothers are rotting in prison and here we are keeping quiet like eunuchs. Women and children on way were calling us traitors and spitting at us, still we keep quiet, waiting for others? How far is the date 31st May? And to live under the flag of foreigners till then?... No, no. Tomorrow is Sunday. Before sunset on this Sunday fetters of those brave men must be broken.”

On Sunday, the 10th May 1857 thousands of armed villagers had assembled in Meerut city. City dwellers were also there with weapons. There were full preparations in cantonment too. Historians write that first of all some troopers went towards the Prison. The Jailor and Jail staff were on the side of revolutionaries. They did not oppose rebellious soldiers. After entering the Jail revolutionary soldiers brought out prisoners with the help of Jail staff and after cutting their fetters set them free. On this side revolutionaries called for a crusade in the entire city and cantonment. Infantrymen, troopers and soldiers of Artillery ran out to kill all Britishers in Merath. Many Britishers were killed. Bungalows and offices were set on fire. Telephone lines were cut and the railway station was placed under guard of revolutionaries. Historians write that some of those Britishers who survived somehow took refuge in hospitals and others in homes of their servants. As rebellion had flared up in city and cantonment both, the small white force that was present there was so much flustered that it could not decide what to do. Revolutionaries of Meerut entrusted the administration of city to some soldiers and officers and set out for Delhi at 2 a.m. on 10th May.

Historian J.C. Wilson has written that by prematurely inciting soldiers there, women of Meerut had saved British Raj from devastation. Similarly, Savarkar has also commented on flaring up of armed revolution before time in Meerut – “Britishers gained

much by the advance rebellion in Meerut. The bright women who spat on life of soldiers in a market of Meerut saying that if they were men, they would get the brave men freed from prison. By doing so, they had certainly added another inspiring story to the shining glory of women in our history; yet, by indirectly alerting foreigners they had thrown indigenous leaders of revolution in an unimaginable pit.”

Historian J.C. Wilson writes further, “With rebellion breaking out in Meerut, devastating fire engulfed India from this corner to that.”

Britishers had no inkling about it. But leaders in Delhi had already got the news that rebels were reaching Delhi on 11th May by 10 o'clock in morning. That time two thousand armed Indian troopers came to Delhi from Meerut. Colonel Ripley, the British officer of Company's forces in Delhi moved forward with 54th indigenous regiment to confront the rebellious force. But those soldiers took the side of Meerut revolutionaries. Col. Ripley got scared and was about to flee. Revolutionary force killed him. After this, infantrymen and Artillery of Meerut also reached Delhi. They chose Bahadurshah Zafar their leader. Historian; Metcalf has written that Bahadurshah told them, “I have no treasury from where will I pay your salaries?” Soldiers said, “We will bring British treasures from all over India and put them on your feet.” Old emperor Bahadurshah accepted leadership of freedom fighters.

The news of beginning of revolution in Meerut and revolutionary forces capturing Delhi spread in whole of India. All this happened so quickly that leaders of all other centres could not decide on what was to be done – to blow the trumpet of revolution in their areas too or to wait for the 31st May? In any case, during the period from 11th May to 31st May 1857 revolution spread all over India. Revolt against Britishers started in areas of central India, Bundelkhand, Ruhelkhand etc. Britishers saw the end of their rule approaching. News from revolution affected areas stopped reaching country's capital, Calcutta. Revolutionaries captured many

places such as Aligarh, Itawa, Mainpuri, Nasirabad, Bareilly, Muradabad, Badayun, Ajamgarh, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Jaunpur etc. and Britishers were removed from there. In every village of all these areas green flags were unfurled. In place after place landlords appointed by Britishers were removed and old hereditary landowners were appointed in their place. In cities, ten to twelve years old boys turned out in procession waving green flags. Historian John K. has written, "Not only in trans-Ganga areas but in areas lying between rivers Ganga and Yamuna too village people turned against Britishers soon, there was not a single man, Hindu or Muslim, who had not turned against us."

During this period, emperor Bahadurshah made two announcements from Delhi which are important from a historical perspective too. It was written in one announcement – "Addressed to all Hindus and Muslims – We have joined the public only on consideration of our duty. On this occasion, one who shows cowardice or the one who believes, due to his gullibility, in the promises of these deceitful foreigners, will be ashamed soon and he will be rewarded for his loyalty to England just as Nawabs of Lucknow were rewarded. In addition, it is also necessary that all Hindus and Muslims should work together in this war and acting on instructions of some reputed leader, should behave in such a way that there is peace all around and poor people lived a contented life; and their status may also go up. All citizens are expected to get copies of this announcement and display it at as many places as possible."

In the second announcement of Bahadurshah too the following call was made to his countrymen – "Hindus and Muslims of Hindustan, rise. Brothers rise. Of all blessings bestowed on mankind by God, the most precious is freedom. Will this tyrannical ruler, who has snatched this blessing from us by deceit, will be able to deprive us of it for ever? Will this kind of thing against the will of God, continue for ever? No....No! These foreigners have oppressed us so much that the cup of their sins has become full. They have even developed the unholy desire to finish our religion. Will you

still remain quiet? It is not the will of God now that you remain quiet because, He has created desire in hearts of Hindus and Muslims to drive these Britishers out of the country. And with the grace of God and by your bravery Britishers' will suffer such a crushing defeat soon that there will be no trace of them in our country, Hindustan. In this force of ours, discrimination between high and low will be forgotten and all will be treated equally because whosoever drew their swords in this holy war in defence of their religion will be entitled to equal glory. They are all brothers, there is no discrimination between high and low among them. Therefore, I once again call upon my Hindustani brothers to rise and to fulfil this God-ordained supreme duty, jump in the battlefield."

Ballad of War

It is true that with premature beginning of revolution operators of revolution and local leaders of various cities had fallen into a tight situation. This news reached Kanpur on 15th May. When Nana Saheb got this news in Bithur, he became worried. But whatever was to happen, had happened. Cards of operators of revolution were revealed. Now they had only one alternative, that they too blew the trumpet of war.

Secret meetings of soldiers were organised in the cantonment of Kanpur. People talked about freedom struggle in schools, markets and public places. Still, Nana Saheb decided to keep quiet till 31st May. On the other side, British Commander in Kanpur, Sir Hugh Wheeler started defensive action after encircling a new place south of Ganga. The intention was that if needed, Britishers could take shelter in it.

Nana Saheb had consultations with Tatya Tope, Ajimullah Khan and Jwala Prasad and it was decided to remain quiet till 31st May and keep the plan of revolution under cover. Despite the fact that Britishers had stopped his pension, Nana Saheb was maintaining cordial relations with them. Some more force from Lucknow reached Kanpur to help Wheeler. It is surprising that even at that time Britishers had full faith in Nana Saheb. Wheeler even sent a message to Nana Saheb asking him to help Britishers in defending Kanpur. On 22nd May 1857, Nana Saheb left Bithur to enter Kanpur city with some force and two guns. Wheeler requested Nana Saheb to safeguard Company's treasure and in order to keep vigil on the treasure Nana Saheb posted two hundred soldiers.

The kind of relationship that Nana Saheb had with Britishers up till now has been presented by some pro-British historians in

such a way as if Nana Saheb himself offered them help and thus in a way, curried favour with Britishers. This is not true. Why Britishers trusted him so much was due only to his cordial and affable nature and to call this trust an outcome of flattery is absolutely unjustified. Surendranath Sen writes in 'Atharah Sau Sattavan' that 'Shepherd added that Nana Saheb had friendly and close relations with many officers of the city. It seems that he had earned so much trust of the Magistrate and Collector Hillersdon that before the beginning of revolution, the latter had decided to leave his family as well as some other families in Nana's protection, but ladies were not in favour of it. Because of Hillersdon's so much trust in Nana the latter was entrusted the responsibility of protecting the Nawabganj Treasury and was also permitted to retain a unit of five hundred troopers and infantrymen under his control. Later, when rebels had gone away, he could capture the armoury with the help of this unit only. According to Shepherd, "Nana Saheb of Bithur offered his services and posing as a loyal servant of government proposed to protect the treasuries with the help of soldiers. That proposal was accepted. This proves that Britishers trusted him too much. Nana Saheb went to reside in a Bungalow near the Treasury and arranged security of that place with the help of five hundred armed soldiers and two small guns." (Shepherd : A Personal Narrative of the out-break and Massacre at Kanpur : p./25). Hillersdon was the only person on the basis of whose statement it would have been possible to come to a conclusion but he was one among those who had been killed in the protected place. One of the four persons who survived there was Moubre Thomson. He stated clearly that it was the Magistrate who had asked Nana to take responsibility of protecting the treasury. According to Thomson there was a sum of more than one lakh pounds in the Treasury and Resident Magistrate Hillersdon was much worried about its safety. Hence after consulting Sir Hugh Wheeler he called Nana from Bithur for help. Nana reached there with his body guards and promised to provide two hundred troopers, four hundred infantrymen and two

guns for protecting the treasury. Treasury was five miles away from the protected area and it wasn't considered proper to shift it there. Hence it was placed in care of a company of 53rd Indigenous Infantry alongwith a unit from Bithur. Nana Saheb himself resided in the civil line of the cantonment. According to Thomson, Britishers' relations with Nana were always so cordial that no British officer ever doubted his loyalty. According to Thomson, "Because of our dire situation we were very anxious and after arrival of his (Nana Saheb's) forces, we had felt much relieved. Rather, it was considered that ladies should be sent to Nana's residence in Bithur, where they would be safe. Although Hillersdon and Wheeler knew it well that the king was not happy after the stoppage of his father's pension but still they had full trust in Nana and they had enjoyed many times his hospitality."

Two main leaders of the Company's Indigenous force stationed in Kanpur, Subedar Tika Singh and Subedar Shamsuddin Khan, two main trusted associates of Nana Saheb, Jwala Prasad and Mohammed Ali and Ajimullah Khan used to conduct secret meetings with Nana Saheb at night on a boat over river Ganga for upto two hours. Preparations for revolution in Kanpur had been completed but Nana Saheb had asked to have patience till 31st May. Britishers were terrified in Kanpur. Even when somebody spread a false rumour about revolution, all Britishers of the city ran at once and along with their families, assembled in the new fort of General Wheeler. The new fort that General Wheeler had got built to face an emergency in future was in fact made of mud walls encircling two vacant plots of the cantonment area. Rupees one lakh, stored ammunition and guns-rifles were kept in it.

Revolt in Kanpur

At midnight of 4th June 1857, suddenly two shots were fired in Kanpur. Piercing the stillness of night, this sound of firing became blowing of conch shell for the revolution. Soldiers were told to take this as a sign of beginning of the revolution. First of all Subedar Tika Singh, riding a horse took the lead. Thousands of

infantrymen and hundreds of troopers followed him. Buildings of Englishmen were set on fire. Britishers flag was lowered on many buildings and Green Flag was unfurled in its place. Nana's force was stationed in Nawabganj. Those soldiers too joined the revolutionary force. By the morning of 5th June, Britishers' Treasury and Magazine – both were in possession of revolutionaries. Savarkar writes, "After capturing Kanpur, three thousand soldiers elected Shrimant NanaSaheb their ruler and expressed their keen desire to see him.... With the approval of Nana they started electing their military officers. New military rules were circulated. The main inspiration behind Kanpur's revolution centre, Subedar Tika Singh was given the post of General of the Army. Similarly, Corporal Dalganjan Singh was appointed Colonel of 53rd Regiment and Subedar Gangadin was appointed Colonel of 56th regiment. Then a large Independence flag was raised up on the back of an elephant and a huge procession was taken out and it was announced that from that day the rule of Shrimant Nana Saheb Peshwa had begun." (*Atharah Sau Sattavan ka Swatantrata Sangram* : p./184-185).

In the morning of 6th June, Nana warned General Wheeler to surrender his fort to revolutionaries. If that was not done, revolutionary forces would attack the fort by the evening. But General Wheeler was not the kind of man who would surrender like that. He got his guns fixed all around the fort. In the evening, revolutionaries started bombarding the fort. Almost all English men, women and children of Kanpur had taken shelter in the fort.

Fighting began again from the morning of 7th June. Guns started firing from both sides. Besides keeping situation in the city under control in order to maintain law and order, Nana Saheb arranged to distribute a notification in his name. This notification was in Hindi and Urdu. In the notification, all Hindus and Muslims of Kanpur were requested to maintain peace. Nana Saheb convened a meeting of reputed and influential people of the city and they were requested therein to cooperate with revolutionary forces to defend the country. Courts were set up to maintain law

and order in the city. Hulasrai was appointed as the Magistrate. He was asked to defend people and their property in the city with utmost care and strictness. Jwala Prasad and Ajimullah Khan were appointed as Judges and Baba Bhatt as Chief Justice.

At one end fighting was going on at Britishers' fort and forces, money etc. from landowners had started coming for Nana's help on the other. This had fortified Nana's forces too. Prominent among those who gave monetary and military aid were – Thakur Motisingh of Nanamau, Raja Satiprasad of Shivrajpur, Dariyavchand of Nar and Raja Durgaprasad of Sachendi. Tatya Tope raised a vast army with rebels and their units.

War continued at General Wheeler's fort. Guns were fired from both sides. Guns of revolutionaries were being operated by Subedar Tika Singh. Their efforts were not succeeding and they were unable to break Britishers' defences. In this situation, Tatya Tope, who was leading the infantry, stopped its advancement because in that situation it would have only become a target of guns. His force fired from a distance after taking cover. On the other side, Britishers were being devoured by death. There was only one well in the fort. Revolutionaries made it a target. Now, whosoever came to the well to fetch water was either killed or made to flee. In the month of June, weather was terribly hot and Britishers began to fall ill due to lack of water. The number of sick and injured people increased gradually. Efficient British artillerymen were killed and that weakened their spirit. Britishers inside the fort held their own but they hoped that they would get military aid from Lucknow or elsewhere and their woes would be lesser. But this did not happen. Whatever food supplies, medicines etc. Wheeler had provided for, were exhausting. When this war entered the 20th day and Britishers began to die of hunger or lack of medicines, General Wheeler put down arms and waved the 'white flag'. War was stopped immediately. Now a letter was sent from Nana Saheb. This letter was drafted by Ajimullah Khan. It was written in the letter – "Those subjects of Queen Victoria who have nothing to do with Dalhousie's policy and who

are prepared to surrender, will be sent to Prayag with complete safety." Meeting of the two sides was fixed to determine conditions of the truce. Moore, Roshe and Whitling on behalf of Britishers and Ajinullah Khan and Jwala Prasad participated on behalf of Nana Saheb. In the meeting it was agreed that Britishers would hand over their property and weapons but every Englishman would be given a rifle and seven cartridges for self defence. It would be the responsibility of Nana Saheb to facilitate all English men, women and children reaching Prayag with complete safety.

Beginning of Revenge

Before proceeding it is imperative to mention that by now oppressive action on the part of Britishers had already begun and without considering anything, they had started butchering Indian populace. Lord Canning had already sent General Neil with a big force to Banaras (now Varanasi). This force contained a majority of whites, some Sikhs and some Madrasis. Banares city was in possession of Britishers. On reaching there, General Neil got those people arrested first who were suspected to lead the revolution. After that, he committed horrible atrocities on the populace of nearby areas. Just one sentence of a British historian makes it clear as to how disgusting these atrocities were, "It is better not to write anything about General Neil's revenge." But, history cannot remain silent. Sir John K. has been recognised as the most authentic and reliable historian of 1857 revolution. He writes, "British officers of both varieties, military and civil were conducting their own blood-stained courts and killing Indians without any pretence of a trial or even consideration of their being men, women or children. Thereafter, their thirst for blood became more intense. Through the letters that Governor General of India sent to England, it has been recorded in the documents of our British Parliament that 'old women and children were killed as brutally as those who were involved in the rebellion'."

Britishers did not feel any shame in saying or even writing in letters that they had not spared a single Indian and that they had

felt it quite amusing and wonderful to shoot those black Indians. In a book that has been supported by high ranking British officers, it is written that it took eight vehicles carrying dead bodies from morning till evening three months to lower corpses suspended at crossroads and markets and thus, just at one place 'six thousand human beings were quickly consigned to death.

After Banares, General Neil reached Allahabad. On 17th June Revolutionaries confronted him with gallantry. Maulvi Liaqat Ali was leading the Indian forces. Compared to Neil's vast army Revolutionaries' army was smaller. Maulvi Liaqat Ali had realised that it was impossible to measure up to that vast army. Besides, at that time Liaqat Ali had a huge treasure of rupees thirty lakhs with him. He wanted to save it from going into enemy's hands. Therefore, in the night of 17th June, he along with his companions and treasure went towards Kanpur. Then he proceeded southwards.

In the night of 18th June, General Neil entered Allahabad with his unit. On this occasion, how brutally Neil and his men carried out their revengeful acts, can be guessed from this incident in which many small boys were hanged just because they were roaming in city's streets in the form of procession beating drums and carrying green flags. British historian Charles Ball has quoted an Englishman, who had described his acts during a single day, "I had great fun during this trip. We boarded a steamer with a gun. Sikh and white soldiers proceeded towards the city. Our steamer moved upstream. We kept bombarding from our gun to the left and right, thus we reached the villages where rebellion had taken place. Reaching the outskirts of villages, we started firing from our rifles. My old two-barrelled gun felled many black men. I was so thirsty of taking revenge. We set villages on our left and right on fire. Flames touched the sky and soon engulfed all houses. Wind helped spread it, which indicated that the day had come to retaliate those treacherous rogues. Everyday we used to set out to burn and destroy villages of rebels and we have taken our revenge. People's lives are in our hands and we assure you that we do not spare anybody."

Sir George Campbell writes, "... and I know that there was indiscriminate massacre in Allahabad. And after that whatever Neil did appeared more terrible than massacre. He deliberately killed people after subjecting them to such terrible tortures that, as far as available evidences tell us, Indians had never inflicted on anyone."

Whatever had happened in Allahabad had been etched in the eyes of revolutionaries of Allahabad who had now reached Kanpur.

Mishap in Sattichoura Ghat (Wharf)

As has already been stated, Nana Saheb had taken responsibility to escort safely all English men, women and children in Kanpur Fort to Allahabad and he had arranged, on 26th June itself, forty boats for this purpose. By that time, revolutionaries from Allahabad and nearby areas had reached Kanpur. They were seething with anger towards Englishmen after what they had seen. After hearing their horrid accounts, revolutionaries of Kanpur were also inflamed. Nana Saheb knew all this and for this reason he had advised that Englishmen in the fort set out on boats in night itself. But Englishmen did not find it suitable. They decided to leave for Allahabad in the morning. Tatya Tope was entrusted with the responsibility of safe departure of Englishmen from Sattichaura Ghat. Despite keeping it secret the news of Englishmen's departure had spread and a big crowd had assembled at Sattichaura Ghat from the morning itself. Boats were to leave Sattichaura at 10 a.m. on 27th June.

On the morning of 27th June British Flag on the fort was lowered and the green flag of Bahadurshah was unfurled in its place. All Englishmen in the fort were seated on elephants and in palanquins and they were taken to Sattichaura Ghat, one and a half miles away from the fort.

To protect boats from the sun, Tatya Tope had got them covered with thatched roofs. Items of food and drinks were also stocked on boats. When all Englishmen had been seated on boats,

Tatya Tope waved his hand from the river bank as a sign for boatmen to proceed. Boats moved but suddenly someone among the crowd blew a trumpet and some boatmen got scared and jumped into the river. One of the Englishmen on a boat, Colonel Tomson fired at a fleeing boatman. This made revolutionary soldiers, who were standing on shore with the crowd, lose patience. They attacked the Englishmen sitting on boats. Fighting began. Commotion broke out everywhere with the sound of intense firing. At that time Nana Saheb was in his court. Somebody came and conveyed news about fighting at Sattichaura Ghat. He said, "they may kill Englishmen but there should be no harm to English women and children." This order of Nana was conveyed to revolutionaries. In compliance of this order, 125 English women and children were taken to Souda Kothi. Thereafter British men were made to stand in a row and were shot. British historians have severely criticized this carnage. Pro-British Indian historians have also written much about this and on the whole all attempts have been made to blame Nana Saheb for this carnage. Surendranath Sen writes in 'Atharah Sau Sattavan' : "Although this story is based on very doubtful evidence, it cannot be ignored perfunctorily. It will have to be accepted that guns were kept on the river bank and soldiers were posted there. Head boatmen Gurdayal and Lochan said that after getting the nod one boat was fired at and then firing spread to other boats tied together. It is possible that arrival of Chauhan landlords there may not have been pre-planned because the news about Britishers' surrender had spread rapidly and people from nearby villages had assembled there since morning to see them taken away. It is not easy to say that Nana Saheb had any hand in this conspiracy. Being the Head of the rebel army, he cannot be absolved from responsibility of these acts and in a way will have to be blamed for this carnage." But John Lang is prepared to give him the benefit of doubt. He has written – "In the absence of any evidence, especially after reading all documents on the subject, I would feel sad if I hold this man responsible for this base deceit and horrible carnage in

Kanpur in June 1857. Nana Saheb understood very well British men and women and knew personally most of those Englishmen who were killed. Hence, it will only be proper to surmise that when he had ordered to prepare the boats his heart-felt desire was to see that Christian people went to Calcutta and whatever happened later was the handiwork of those who wanted to make the rift between Nana Saheb and British government so wide that there remained no scope of peace and conciliation in future." It cannot be denied that it was Nana who had saved British women and children from the bullets of soldiers that day. Writing in this regard a year later, Colonel Modd had also felt that Nana had no hand in this terrible crime – "After reading him (evidence collected by Colonel Williams) carefully and without prejudice, it is doubtful that, as is commonly believed, Nana Saheb was involved in getting our women and children killed. My view is that he had to do this under pressure of his blood - thirsty followers and he had no courage to check their acts. The plan of the carnage at the wharf was devised by a cunning person with bestial intentions and Nana Saheb certainly was not of that type."

Sen adds, "Jwala Prasad, Ajimullah Khan and Bala Rao have also been blamed along with Tatya Tope for the deceit of 27th June. But the number of such persons was very small who had some score to settle. The carnage at Sattichaura had taken place after Neil's misdeeds and not before. If Nana Saheb and his followers are held guilty of this crime in terms of law, Neil would have to be adjudged guilty on moral grounds." (p./172-174). Similarly, in '*Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj*' Sunderlal has also described Sattichaura carnage as a reaction to Neil's massacre. "Undoubtedly, carnage at Sattichaura Ghat cannot be said to be valid. To attack unarmed people is against war ethics. Besides Nana had promised to protect lives of these people. On the other hand we will have to remember that to an extent, the responsibility of carnage at Sattichaura Ghat falls on much more macabre atrocities of General Neil and his associates that had upset the people and Indian soldiers of Kanpur to this extent." (p./857-55).

Re-establishment of Peshwadom

Nana Saheb called an extended court on 28th June 1857 after restoration of peace in Kanpur and all signs of British rule were erased from Kanpur city, cantonment and adjoining areas. Six regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, many landlords and a large number of common people were present in this court meeting. Describing this ceremony, Savarkar has written : “After the extinction of British rule in Kanpur, Nana Saheb convened an extended court at 5 p.m. on 28th June. In honour of that royal court, a Parade of all the forces present there at the time was also called. Six full regiments of infantry and two regiments of cavalry were present in the ceremony. In addition, various groups of volunteers coming from far-off villages to fight this great war also stood there with their respective flags. The force responsible for winning Kanpur i.e. the small but valorous Artillery was rightly given a place of pride. On his arrival Bala Saheb, being the darling of the forces, was given standing ovation. It is worth noting here as to how respectfully and cordially Hindus and Muslims treated each other in 1857. Later, on seeing the cavalcade of Shrimant Nana Saheb on the ground, everyone gave the Maharaj a standing ovation and he was also given a ceremonial salutation of twenty one guns. It is also said that these twenty one guns symbolized the twenty one days of battle. Maharaj expressed his gratitude to the vast Army for this honour... Later, as soon as it was announced that the king has ordered to give a prize of Rs. one lakh to the Army, another salutation of twenty one guns was given. Later, each of the two nephews of Nana Saheb, Rao Saheb and Bala Saheb was given salutation of 16-17 guns respectively. Brig Jwala Prasad and army commander Tatya Tope were also honoured with eleven guns salutation separately. Thus, after greeting the sun God of that day with blasts of victorious guns of freedom struggle, the entire army was sent back to its camp.

“After this parade of the Army, Shrimant Nana Saheb along with Shrimant Bala Saheb proceeded towards the historically

famous place of Bithur. 1st July 1857 was fixed as the day of coronation ceremony. How splendid the palace will look that day! That traditional throne of Peshwas was ceremonially brought to the court after being consecrated with recitation of Mantras. Shrimant Nana Saheb was adorned with a tilak on his forehead as a mark of his coronation and in presence of thousands of citizens and with loud blasts of guns Shrimant Nana Saheb Peshwa sat on the independent throne that was earned by his own efforts, was approved by masses and which was the protector of religion. That day, thousands of people in Kanpur had sent gifts to Nana Saheb.”

Celebrations of Nana Saheb's coronation were still going on when news came that General Havlock along with forces has set out from Allahabad for Kanpur. Before this, after capturing Allahabad, General Neil kept a small portion of Army there and sent the remaining force under Major Kinard to help Britishers in Kanpur. This force was setting villages on both sides of the way between Allahabad and Kanpur on fire. As soon as Nana Saheb heard this news, he stopped all programmes and started preparations of war. He rushed to Kanpur. There he entrusted the responsibility of being prepared for war to Tatya Tope and proceeded towards Fatehpur along with three thousand infantrymen, five hundred cavalymen and twelve guns. Prominent men like Jwala Prasad, Tika Singh, Baba Bhatt, Liaqat Ali etc. were also with him. On the other side, rumour also spread in Kanpur city that British army was proceeding rapidly towards Kanpur. This made people of Kanpur scared. Then, Nana Saheb got an announcement issued. This announcement said that to drive off Britishers a vast army has been sent and people of Kanpur should not worry. This army was sent under the leadership of Jwala Prasad and Tika Singh. On 12th July fierce fighting took place between the two armies near Fatehpur in which revolutionary army of Kanpur had to withdraw. Thereafter, Britishers entered Fatehpur city. At the time Magistrate of Fatehpur Sheror was with Havlock's army. Havlock and Sheror took horrible revenge

of Fatehpur's announcement of independence. First of all, Company's soldiers were ordered to plunder the city. Then, by orders of British Army Commander, the entire city of Fatehpur and its residents were consigned to flames.

The news of Britishers' savageness in Fatehpur reached Nana Saheb. When leaders and residents of Kanpur heard about this, there was no limit to their anger. To confront the advancing British army, Nana Saheb himself set out with his forces. But, in the meantime, enraged people of Kanpur committed a shameful act about which historians have given various accounts. It is true that this incident became a disgrace on the part of revolutionaries. It is said that 125 British women and children were imprisoned in Bibigarh. They were brutally slaughtered and their bodies thrown in a well. Once again, British historians tried to prove Nana Saheb a brute killer for the Bibigarh carnage. But the truth is that this carnage was neither carried out by his orders, nor he was present in Kanpur at that time. After proceeding from Bithur, Nana Saheb was himself leading the army for the Ahirwan battle. Despite there being no evidence with them, along with British historians, Indian historians too hold Nana Saheb directly responsible for this carnage. In his book 'Atharah Sau Sattavan', Surendranath Sen writes "Nana is blamed for Bibigarh carnage also. But, on basis of the kind of evidence that was placed before Col. Williams, no court will convict even the most infamous criminal. Nonetheless, lack of reliable evidence does not mean that the crime had not taken place. On legal and moral grounds the responsibility of prisoners' life devolved on Nana and the carnage was also carried out in his name. Till the time it is not proved finally that he had no knowledge of it, he cannot be absolved of his complicity in this conspiracy and the blemish for this shameful act will stick to his name." But before writing in this vein it was necessary to consider carefully the statements and evidences that do not find Nana guilty of this carnage. As Britishers were killed in the carnage, historians sympathetic to them find Nana directly guilty

for it because at that time there was Nana's rule in Kanpur. But does the responsibility of all crimes committed in a city of which the ruler may not have any knowledge, devolve on him? British historians themselves have taken Nana's side in the Bibigarh carnage and that shows impartiality of his mind and thought. Historian Sir John K. writes, "It has been stated in histories of that period that along with this horrible carnage many other excessive brutalities and indescribable shameful acts were perpetrated. In reality, things regarding these brutalities and shameful acts were imagined by people in a frenzied state of mind. Others believed those things without verification and started spreading them in a mindless manner.... Everything about the carnages of June and July was thoroughly examined by members of government commission and they have opined in clear terms that no mayhem was perpetrated, nor anyone was dishonoured."

Going beyond even this statement of Sir John K., historian Sir George Campbell writes, "It is difficult to extenuate the gravity of the sin of carnage in Kanpur; even so, we should bear two things in mind. First, nobody executed this carnage in a pre-planned way, but when Havlock was advancing after hammering revolutionaries this act was committed out of momentary anger and frustration. Secondly, our forces themselves had incited people to commit such acts by their atrocities during their advancement towards Kanpur. After a while, it was investigated very carefully to ascertain the circumstances under which this carnage had taken place and we could not lay our hands on anything that indicated that somebody had intended to commit this act or someone had issued orders to carry out the carnage."

When Havlock was advancing towards Kanpur with his forces, Nana Saheb himself confronted him with his forces. Revolutionary army was in full spirit. It fought valiantly the British force. But revolutionary forces proved to be inadequate and weaker in comparison to Havlock's army. At first, Nana Saheb had to withdraw but seeing the high spirit of revolutionaries, fierce fighting took place yet again. But finally Nana Saheb had to withdraw

and he went to Bithur with his remaining forces. It is said that Ajimullah Khan had become a martyr in this battle.

Nana Saheb knew that Havlock could pursue him right up to Bithur. That is why he moved across Ganga along with treasure, weapons and forces and he stayed first in Fatehgarh Chaurasi. Savarkar has thus described the touching scene of farewell of Bala Saheb etc. from Bithur, "After darkness had settled, boats were ready with all necessary things loaded on them, thousands of citizens had gathered on the bank of Ganga to bid farewell to Bala Saheb and others.... Before getting the boats moved Shrimant Bala Saheb bowed humbly before the large crowd and controlling his emotions with difficulty told them that since we lost battle in Kanpur, we have no knowledge of whereabouts of Tatya Tope and other chieftains. But since they are brave men, we have no worry. It is difficult for us to leave you all like this, but there is no alternative."

When Nana Saheb reached Bithur after facing defeat in Kanpur, he deliberated with all associates on the reasons of defeat. Despite military power, ammunition etc. why did they suffer defeat? Nana could pinpoint only one answer to this question – that there was no single commander of his forces. Each of several chieftains was giving directions to soldiers according to his strategy – that diffused their strengths instead of converting those into a huge integrated force. Hence, he now appointed Tatya Tope the commander-in-chief and entrusted to him the responsibility to lead the revolt. Thereafter, Tatya left Bithur and got absorbed in organising military.

On 18th July 1857 Nana set out from Bithur and on this very date Major Stevenson proceeded towards Bithur with his army. He captured the palace at Bithur.

Nana Saheb took refuge in Chaudhary Bhopal Singh's residence in Fatehgarh Chaurasi. Although Nana was losing hope, Tatya Tope did not let him despair. Within a month, Tatya Tope turned the 41st Infantry which was camping at Shivrajpur in his

favour and thus collected 4,000 soldiers and two guns. Tatya Tope also thought it necessary that they should have a strong fort in their possession from where he could operate the activities of revolution. It was not possible to operate them from Fatehgarh Chaurasi, where Nana had taken refuge. Hence, Tatya chose the strong fort of Kalpi for this purpose. Standing on a steep rock at the right bank of Yamuna river, this fort of Kalpi proved very important from a strategic point of view. Kanpur is just 47 miles away from here. Kalpi was very near Fatehgarh Chaurasi, where Nana was camping. Tatya Tope took possession of Kalpi fort after attacking it. In the meantime, Tatya had augmented his military strength. He also advised Nana to shift the headquarters of Peshwa to Kalpi. On the other side revolutionaries of Lucknow had captured the city and Begum Hazrat Mahal was leading them. They were also in contact with Nana Saheb. Havlock now wanted to occupy Lucknow and free Britishers entrapped there. He entrusted the administration of Kanpur to General Neil and proceeded towards Lucknow. As soon as he crossed Ganga he was confronted by revolutionary forces. Havlock had to retreat twice under compulsion. At the same time 42nd Regiment stationed at Sagar (M.P.) revolted. This regiment proceeded towards Kanpur and after crossing Yamuna river near Kalpi, reached Akbarpur. Revolutionary army had become quite vast but it had no commander. So they sent a letter to Nana Saheb camping at Fatehgarh Chaurasi, requesting him to lead them. This 42nd Regiment was famous for its valour throughout the country. In response to this request Nana Saheb deputed Tatya Tope to lead the army. Thus, Tatya Tope reached Akbarpur and assumed its leadership. Historians write that till now Tatya Tope had worked only under Nana Saheb, Bala Saheb and Rao Saheb. This was the first time when Tatya Tope had assumed commandership of an Army independently. On the strength of this army Tatya Tope captured Sachedi and Shivrajpur. From there the army proceeded towards Bithur. Many revolutionary groups joined them on way. Tatya succeeded in capturing Bithur once again. Nana wanted

that Kanpur be captured once again. At this moment they had quite large army with them. Kanpur was under the control of General Neil then. When he came to know of Nana's intentions of attacking Kanpur, he asked Havlock to return immediately. After crossing Ganga yet again Havlock returned to Kanpur on 12th August. By this time, Nana Saheb had reached Bithur. When Havlock came to know that Tatya Tope's forces had occupied Bithur yet again and Nana Saheb had reached there, he proceeded towards Bithur to attack him. When Havlock came to know that Nana Saheb had stationed a vast army at Kalpi near Yamuna, he stayed put in Kanpur itself because he was afraid lest Nana may try to occupy Kanpur yet again. However, forces soon came to help Havlock. Thereafter, with about a thousand soldiers and a large Artillery Havlock reached Bithur. He attacked the forces of Tatya Tope and sealed mouths of his two guns. Tatya was forced to withdraw and British forces occupied Bithur.

Nana Saheb had already left Bithur and later Tatya also left with his remaining forces. Thus, British authority over Kanpur and Bithur was established yet again.

The possibility of Kanpur and Bithur being captured again by Nana Saheb had almost finished. The revolution that was called by Nana Saheb had been subdued in north India. Britishers ruled everywhere including Delhi, Meerut, Aligarh and Allahabad. The dream of liberation had ended in absence of unity and leadership.

Due to absence of a leader acceptable to all, there was lack of unity at centres of revolution. That gave enough time and opportunities to Britishers to subdue revolts. The defeat at Kanpur was an unbearable blow for Nana Saheb. That destroyed his plan of revolution. His forces had been disintegrated. He had been left with no weapons or ammunition. He saw nothing but disappointment all around. But he had such a diligent and farsighted man with him who was still working with courage and wanted to bring back the lost glory of Peshwas. In Fatehgarh Chaurasi Nana Saheb gathered some people and prepared plans for future.

Uptill now Nana Saheb had understood that at that time only Tatya Tope could make a success of future plans. Whatever efforts Tatya Tope had made so far, were in the name of Nana Saheb. In fact, everybody considered Tatya Tope to be capable of keeping alive the flame of revolution. Therefore, the task of making future plans and to lead in the war of revolution was also entrusted to Tatya Tope. Tatya Tope established an independent revolutionary state in Kalpi within a short period with his efficiency. The capital of this state was Kalpi and its second prominent city was Jalalpur. In this connection, the writer of 'History of Indian Mutiny', G.W. Forest has written that on the bank of Betwa river near Kalpi, revolutionaries had established an independent sovereign state in Jalalpur. As a representative of the Peshwa, Tatya Tope collected taxes from landowners residing near Yamuna Banks. With this money soldiers were recruited for the revolutionary army and other war materials were purchased. Although, the independent state at Kalpi was established by Tatya Tope, he did not consider himself to be its ruler. He was a servant of the Peshwa. Peshwa Nana Saheb was in Fatehgarh Chaurasi. People of Kalpi were not satisfied with this arrangement. In practice Tatya was running the government but people of Kalpi wanted that the real ruler should come to stay in Kalpi or send one of his descendants as his representative there. When this proposal was placed before Nana Saheb, he did not find it proper to stay there and sent his nephew Rao Saheb as his representative to Kalpi. Thus, Rao Saheb's orders carried the authority in Kalpi now. Tatya Tope had to take permission from Rao Saheb before implementing any scheme or for any other work.

The most important task before Tatya Tope was to augment the state's military power. By now all revolutionary soldiers of Allahabad, Banares, Fatehpur etc. who were wandering here and there in hiding, had reached Kalpi. Landlords residing around Kalpi had also sent their soldiers to Kalpi in the service of Tatya Tope. After a few days, forces of Nawabs of Farukhabad and Banda and many other landlords had also reached Kalpi.

Tatya Tope wanted the support of Gwalior's forces too. At that time there was one force in Gwalior that belonged to its ruler Jayaji Rao Scindia in which there were only one thousand soldiers. The second force was in Britishers' control - in which there were four regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry and four artilleries aggregating about four and a half thousand soldiers. To get their support, one day Tatya Tope quietly left Kalpi to go to Gwalior. There he met the members of these forces secretly and these regiments agreed to support him. Tatya Tope also met Scindia and asked for military cooperation. Four regiments of Gwalior Cantonment came to Tatya's side. Tatya Tope sought help from Scindia in moving these forces to Kalpi, for which the latter agreed. Tatya Tope returned to Kalpi with these forces.

FLAGGING FLAME OF REVOLUTION

Tatya Tope was still striving continuously to re-establish the rule of Peshwas. He had fortified his military strength and he wanted to attack Kanpur once again to regain it. At that time the great revolutionary leader of Bihar, Kunwar Singh was in Banda. Tatya had sought support from him too in attacking Kanpur. Kunwar Singh reached Kalpi. Nana Saheb had also come to Kalpi. He got the information that the British army of Kanpur was moving towards Lucknow. This was true. The new British Commander Campbell set out from Kanpur with a vast army for Lucknow. He entrusted the responsibility of defending Kanpur to General Windham and left a small force there. On 9th November Campbell set out for Lucknow and on 10th November Tatya's army left Kalpi for Kanpur. Tatya laid siege to the city in such a way that it became impossible for British forces to get supplies and military assistance from outside. But at that very time two and a half thousand British troops came in Kanpur. That gave courage to Windham. Campbell had advised him that in case of an attack he could defend himself by remaining within the circle formed by the boat bridge. But Windham did not care for this advice. He proceeded to confront Tatya. Tatya Tope had made his entrenchment at the bank of Pandu river, seven miles away from Kanpur. Tatya had two and a half thousand infantry men, five hundred mounted soldiers and six guns with him. As soon as he faced Tatya's forces, Windham attacked. But, in order to avoid this direct assault Tatya's army started bombarding after moving a little to their right. British historian Malleon writes, "The leader of rebel army was no fool. He was not afraid of the losses suffered by Windham's first strike, rather he understood very well the weakness of British commander. Tatya Tope read the situation of Windham at that time so well as someone reads

an open book. Tatya had in him the natural qualities of a true commander. He decided to take advantage of these weaknesses of Windham.” Next day, surrounding Windham’s forces from three sides, Tatya Tope’s army started pushing it back. To the extent that advancing like this, half of Kanpur came into the possession of Tatya’s army. Thus, after three days’ incessant battle, the entire city of Kanpur once again came in Tatya Tope’s hands and Windham’s forces had to flee. In this battle about three hundred Britishers were killed. Once again, Kanpur came under the authority of Nana Saheb. In this battle, revolutionaries were able to lay their hands on about eleven thousand cartridges, five hundred tents, horse saddles of British army, the value of which at that time must be about rupees five lakhs.

When General Collin Campbell got the news of Britishers’ defeat, he had to leave Lucknow. When Tatya Tope came to know of it, he got the bridge over Ganga broken and set guns over the river so that Campbell could not advance. But Collin Campbell was also a clever commander. He crossed Ganga from a different site and reached near Kanpur on 30th November 1857. By this time Nana Saheb had also reached Kanpur to assist Tatya Tope. Nana Saheb had set up observation posts at many places on banks of Ganga. At this time, he had about fourteen thousand troops with him. But British forces too had clever commanders like Collin Campbell, Hope Grant and Walpole. Historian Malleon writes that natural capabilities of Tatya Tope as an army commander were very much advanced. He laid a siege on Campbell’s forces right at the bank of Ganga. After six days of fierce battle, Campbell eventually won. Britishers once again captured Kanpur city. In this battle, revolutionaries suffered heavy losses. When Tatya Tope proceeded towards the south with his remaining forces, Hope Grant followed him. Tatya’s forces rushed to Saraiya Ghat to cross Ganga. But by that time Hope Grant reached there with his forces. Once again, both forces fought. Eventually, Tatya had to withdraw after leaving his fifteen guns behind. After this, he went straight to Kalpi. At that

time Peshwa Nana Saheb had reached Bithur. But hearing the news of revolutionary army's defeat and Tatya's going back to Kalpi he went again to Fatehgarh Chaurasi within borders of Awadh.

After the battle of Saraiya Ghat General Hope Grant moved towards Bithur. By this time much hatred had been created in Britishers' hearts towards Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope and they were hell bent on finishing them. One sample of this hatred was seen in Bithur where soldiers of Hope Grant, following the 'shoot at sight' orders, kept killing people of Bithur. They did not discriminate between men, women or children in this carnage. Thousands of innocent persons lost their lives. Buildings belonging to Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope were razed to ground with the help of guns. Peshwa's Ganga temple made of glass was also destroyed.

Fall of Awadh

Britishers had re-captured many places like Delhi, Meerut etc. A major portion of the revolutionary army was being assembled now in Awadh and Ruhelkhand. This was being turned into the most important stronghold of the state's revolution. Before conquering the state once again it was necessary to capture all areas stretching west of Awadh and east of Delhi. Many British Generals had set out with their units in different directions for this purpose. To overawe and overwhelm the rural populace these people adopted the same methods that had been adopted by Neil, Havlock and Greathead before them.

Although the Residency was freed from revolutionaries in Lucknow, rest of the city was still under the authority of revolutionaries. Leaving four thousand soldiers at Alambagh under the leadership of General Outram, Campbell had returned to Kanpur. A Landlord of Faizabad, Maulvi Ahmedshah was leading revolutionaries in Lucknow. Lucknow was being defended so far by the political and strategic moves of Nana Saheb and Tatya Tope. Maulvi Ahmedshah took full advantage of it. Malleson

writes about Maulvi Ahmedshah that, "Maulvi was an extraordinary man. Many proofs of his ability as a commander were available. No other man could say it with pride that he had defeated Sir Collin Campbell twice." Similarly, historian Holmes has written, "Maulvi Ahmedshah of Faizabad was a person who, considering his passion and ability, was capable of running a movement and leading a vast army." But gradually some people had become jealous of Ahmedshah and they used to disobey his orders. This had created a rift between revolutionaries of Lucknow. Because of mutual dissension among revolutionaries, Britishers could not be driven out of Alambagh. Ahmedshah was very keen that all revolutionaries get organised and attack the Britishers with all their strength in such a way that they are forced to flee from Alambagh. Revolutionary forces had received the information that Campbell was to attack Lucknow again with a vast army. To chalk out the strategy to confront that attack deliberations took place between revolutionaries but due to differences among them no concrete plan could be devised.

On 6th March 1858 Lucknow was attacked by Campbell from north and by Outram from east. Revolutionaries fought fiercely with both armies. But gradually they were proving to be inadequate. Seeing the fall of Lucknow near, Begum Hazrat Mahal, her son Birjis Qadar and Maulvi Ahmed Shah left the city. On 14th March British forces entered the Palace of Lucknow. On 21st March Maulvi Ahmedshah clashed again with Britishers with few soldiers. British historians write that Maulvi Ahmedshah fought with unprecedented valour that day and caused heavy damage to the enemy and eventually, when he saw a victory impossible, left Lucknow. Company reigned in the whole city of Lucknow. After that Britishers subjected the people of city to unparalleled atrocities.

The fall of Lucknow was the fall of Awadh. Awadh, which was the base of Nana Saheb's security was no longer safe for him and he had to keep wandering here and there. Although, Tatya Tope still remained loyal to him and he continued to do

everything in the name of Peshwa's throne but after this juncture probably there is no evidence of any meeting or contact between them.

After conquering Lucknow, British forces set out with the intention of capturing the rest of Awadh and raising the flag of Company's rule over it. At that time Nana Saheb was in Shahjahanpur. Maulvi Ahmedshah also reached there; many revolutionary soldiers followed him. When Campbell came to know about it, he laid siege to Shahjahanpur. But Nana Saheb, revolutionary soldiers and maulvi Ahmedshah had already left the place. When Campbell left Shahjahanpur for Bareilly, Maulvi Ahmedshah attacked Shahjahanpur again under the leadership of Nana Saheb and captured it. After this, Begum Hazrat Mahal and the last prince of Mughal dynasty reached Shahjahanpur too. When Campbell got the news that revolutionary leaders had assembled again in Shahjahanpur, he turned again to Shahjahanpur to catch them. But revolutionary leaders had already left it.

Maulvi Ahmedshah was on target of Britishers. They were constantly trying to somehow capture him. But due to his popularity Ahmedshah used to mingle with common people in such a way that Britishers were unable to catch him. Maulvi Saheb wanted to increase his military power. For this purpose he sought financial assistance from the ruler of a small princely state Pauna, Raja Jagannath Singh. The King called him to his palace and deceitfully attacked and killed him. Then he beheaded Maulvi and sent his severed head to the camp of British army. For this act, Britishers rewarded Raja Jagannath Singh rupees five thousand. Revolutionary leaders rose to teach a lesson to the king for the treachery he had done to Maulvi Ahmedshah. A number of landlords organised under the leadership of Nana Saheb. Five thousand soldiers of Farukhabad came under the banner of Nana Saheb. Khan Bahadur of Bareilly also came with his forces. Narpati Singh, son of Ruiya's king also came on the side of Nana Saheb. Seeing all these preparations, king of Pauna was scared. He sought Britishers' help, General Hope Grant came with his forces.

Revolutionary forces and the British force of Hope Grant clashed in Nawabganj. After this, Pauna was attacked. Then revolutionary forces clashed with British forces at many places. As revolutionary forces were not as resourceful as British forces, constant clashes diminished their strength. British forces used to win and revolutionary forces disintegrated.

Nana Saheb was now residing in the safe abodes of Awadh and Bundelkhand. He used to change these abodes too so that Britishers could not catch him or somebody could not do treachery to him. He went to many places like Kalpi, Gwalior etc. and remained in constant touch with revolutionary leaders.

Rani Laxmibai and Revolutionary Forces

For eleven months the entire area stretching from south of Yamuna and north of Vindhyaachal remained in the hands of revolutionary forces and that was due to Rani Laxmibai's efficient military leadership. To subdue revolutionaries of this region a vast army was built under the leadership of Sir Hurose and it marched on 6th January 1858 from Mau (near Indore). Conquering places like Raigarh, Sagar, Banapur, Chanderi etc. on way, this army reached Jhansi. At that time Jhansi was the largest centre of revolutionaries of Bundelkhand. The king of Banapur Mardansingh, kings of many small princely states and landlords were present in Jhansi at that time with their forces, weapons, guns and ammunition. Seeing the British forces advancing, Rani Laxmibai accepted command of the revolutionary army. It is said that the Rani was so assiduous that she got every single entrenchment prepared and got every gun mounted on ramparts before her eyes. Sir Hurose has written that hundreds of women of Jhansi were seen with the Rani going in and coming out of Artilleries and Magazines and working there. On 24th March Bombardment was started by a gun named 'ghangaraj' from Jhansi's side on British forces. After this, fighting went on continuously for eight days. But it was difficult for Jhansi's forces to endure before the Company's vast army. Hence, Rani Laxmibai arranged to send a letter to Tatya

Tope in Kalpi requesting him to come with forces and help. At that time Tatya Tope had just returned to Kalpi after conquering the king of Charkhari. As soon as he received Rani's letter, Tatya marched towards Jhansi. Hearing that Tatya Tope was coming to Jhansi with a vast army Company's forces were in a fix. But it acted sensibly. Company's army gathered courage and turning to Tatya's army it attacked so fiercely that Tatya had to give in. About a thousand and a half soldiers of Tatya Tope were killed and many of his guns came into the hands of Britishers. The plight of Jhansi kept deteriorating. Rani Laxmibai fought the British forces stubbornly after getting her forces organised time and again. At the same time, for lure of a few gold coins a traitor named Dulhasingh Pardesi opened the southern gate of the city. That facilitated entry of British forces in the city. Rani saw from ramparts of the fort massacre and devastation of city dwellers. She rushed at once towards the British forces with a thousand soldiers. Both sides threw guns away and fought with swords. Company's forces had to retreat a little. Just then someone informed the Rani that the guard of the main gate Sardar Khudabakhsha and an officer of the Artillery Sardar Ghulam Ghouse Khan - both were killed. That meant that the northern gate of the city was also open now for the enemy. Rani's heart broke. She decided to continue the freedom struggle after reaching somewhere outside Jhansi. Rani Laxmibai left Jhansi the same night. Jhansi was occupied by the Company. Rani tied her adopted son to her back and departed for Kalpi.

As soon as he got the news that Rani Laxmibai was going towards Kalpi, Lieutenant Walker pursued her with some selected cavaliers. Eventually Walker reached up to her. Just one strike of Rani's sword wounded and felled Walker from the horse. Soldiers accompanying the Rani gave such a sound thrashing to Walker's men that they ran away with the wounded Walker.

After reaching Kalpi, Rani's beloved white horse fell and died. In the morning Rani Laxmibai talked to Rao Saheb, the nephew of Nana Saheb and commander Tatya Tope. It is said

that Rani Laxmibai told Rao Saheb. "This sword was given by your ancestors. By virtue of their meritorious deeds, my ancestors and I have used it appropriately but since your assistance and grace was no longer forthcoming, please have this sword back."

Rao Saheb said, "I had sent Tatya Tope for your help. But unfortunately he could not reach upto Jhansi. You have displayed valour according to Jhansi's tradition and your own glory. Making the mighty British army look vulnerable, you have fought fierce battle with them. Everyone is praising your valour and military prowess right now. If we have as brave and self respecting military leaders as you are, our goals will be achieved. In the period of our ancestors all our chieftains like Scindia, Holkar, Gaikwad, Bundels etc. were always prepared to sacrifice their lives for defending the country. That is why the flag of Marathas waved upto Atak. If we get help from brave people like you, there is no doubt that that glorious period may come again. Therefore, you accept this sword again and be helpful to us."

Hearing this statement of Rao Saheb, Rani Laxmibai took the sword back and lost no time in making future strategy. Sunderlal has written in 'Bharat Mein Angrezi Raj' – Rani Laxmibai, Rao Saheb, Tatya Tope, Nawab of Banda, Rulers of Shahgarh and Banapur and many revolutionary leaders were present then in Kalpi with their forces. It would not have been difficult for this vast military force to get the better of their enemy. But there was none among these who could make all others obey his orders. The Rani was the ablest but she was a woman and her age was only 22 years. Tatya Tope was brave and an efficient commander but he was born in an ordinary family. At that time it was not so easy for senior dynastic kings to work under a woman or a man coming from an ordinary family. Exactly the same problem had been the main cause of Delhi's fall. Even so, Rani Laxmibai alone reached Kaunchgaon, forty two miles away from Kalpi, with a small force, where Hurose had come and wanted to proceed towards Kalpi. The point to note here is that due to difference of opinion between Rao Saheb and Tatya Tope, who

remained in Kalpi, nobody gave full cooperation to the Rani. The result was that in Kaunchgaon revolutionaries were defeated again. Praising the courage and valour of Rani Laxmibai, historian Malleson had written that even after this defeat Rani's force returned to Kalpi in amazingly orderly manner.

But Hurose was not one who would stop. When he attacked Kalpi again, Rani Laxmibai once again motivated her forces and came forward with her cavaliers to confront Hurose. Fierce fighting went on between the two forces. Eventually, Hurose won once again. Company's army occupied the fort of Kalpi. Rao Saheb, Nawab of Banda, Rani Laxmibai all got away from there.

Now revolutionaries had no war material, nor an organised army worth mentioning nor a fort. Even so, Laxmibai did not lose courage and she continued to support Tatya Tope. Tatya quietly brought Scindia's army and his subjects to his side. Now they made Gopalpur the centre of revolution. Rao Saheb and Nawab of Banda also reached Gopalpur near Gwalior. The forces and people of Gwalior had come to the side of revolutionaries. Gwalior's army honoured Rao Saheb, the representative of Nana Saheb, taking him to be Peshwa with salutations by guns. Revolutionaries also got the entire treasure of Scindia.

On 3rd June 1858 a vast court was convened in Phool Bagh. A number of aristocrats, chieftains and rich men marked their presence in it. Arabians, Ruhels, Rajputs and Marathas – all attended the court in their traditional attires. Peshwa's crested turban was put on the head of Rao Saheb. Calling Rao Saheb the Peshwa before the entire court loud exultations were made. Tatya Tope was appointed the commander-in-chief. Rupees twenty lakhs were distributed among army personnel and finally there was salutation with guns. People regarded it as the return of Peshwadam.

Commenting on this ceremony convened as the return of Peshwadam, Savarkar has written, "Thus, by setting a new throne, Rao Saheb, the representative of Nana Saheb Peshwa gave a new hope, new life to the revolutionary groups and established a

new centre to bind the disintegrated revolutionaries together. There was no madness on the part of Tatya to convene the coronation ceremony and blasting guns in salutation in the midst of war. World had seen revolution to be dying. Tatya had lifted it from the abyss of disappointment by this expedient. World had shouted partly cheerfully and partly out of despair – ‘Revolution is dead now, there is no life in it.’ But what kind of a magic this was! Tatya picked up dead soil in Gopalpur, blew it and the world saw in amazement that a throne rose from that soil, at the foot of which there was clink of lakhs of rupees. Thousands of swords are stretched. Guns are blasting in salutation. A new Army is ready. New guns are ready. Tatya has won a new state. But Tatya has not tried to bewilder the world with this miracle. He has been loyal to Peshwa. He knew that blasting of guns on coronation of Maratha Peshwa will organise revolutionaries scattered at far off places. He knew that seeing the national flag fluttering unlimited enthusiasm and courage will be generated in them. That is why Tatya and other revolutionary leaders had exhibited the pomp of coronation. This plan of leaders was successful as blasting of Tatya’s guns had ended the plan of Hurose to get some rest.” Malleson writes about the cleverness and political wisdom of Tatya Tope and Rani Laxmibai in occupying Gwalior: “How an impossibility turned into a possibility has been indicated. Hurose knew well the consequences of delaying things further. If Gwalior was not snatched from revolutionaries soon, what terrible consequences would follow – it was difficult to imagine. If time was allowed, occupation of Gwalior would impart unlimited political and military power as well as manpower, money, war material etc. to him. On the strength of these, he will raise a new army by integrating the scattered forces in Kalpi and that will pave the way of Maratha ascendancy in India.”

There was rejoicing all around after the coronation of Rao Saheb. People indulged in merry making and songs and dances followed. Seeing all this Laxmibai said that the danger of Britishers attacking us was very much there and we should be prepared for

it. But Rao Saheb and other leaders ignored Rani Laxmibai's advice. The precious time that should have been used for military organisation and increasing strength was wasted in feasts and celebrations. The danger that Rani Laxmibai had apprehension of turned out to be true. Hurose came to Gwalior with his forces. He attacked the revolutionary forces. Tatya Tope did confront them but he was forced to withdraw. Rao Saheb was flustered. Laxmibai organised the forces and fought with British forces. Rani Laxmibai fought fiercely for three days. The third day Rani was surrounded by British forces and became a martyr. History will rarely recall an instance of such a woman who has fought for her country's freedom with such superhuman valour and extraordinary military prowess or sacrificed her life on battlefield fighting for her ideals in such a young age.

Now Rao Saheb and Tatya Tope were all alone. They wandered here and there. Britishers wanted to get hold of Tatya Tope. Rao Saheb had remained with Tatya Tope for some days but was separated later. It seems that no strength was left in Rao Saheb to fight. Even otherwise Britishers were in pursuit of him. Gallows was a sure thing after being caught. There was lack of resources for struggling. He thought it proper to become an ascetic and wandered in forests of Punjab.

Many revolutionary leaders like Nana Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal etc. were somehow able to save themselves from Britishers and were wandering. The hide and seek game between Tatya Tope and Britishers continued for a long time. Eventually, Tatya Tope became a victim of treachery and was caught. He was tried in a court of law and as was pre-determined, he was hanged on 18th April 1859 in Shivpuri.

After about three years, Rao Saheb was also caught and he was hanged on 30th August 1862.

Last Days

Although the revolution against Britishers had been subdued, a number of revolutionary leaders and soldiers were wandering here and there. They neither wanted to surrender nor being caught by Britishers. People giving them shelter were scared too. Hence, any ruler and landlord who owed allegiance to Britishers was not prepared to give them shelter.

On the other hand, it was announced to end the Company's rule and to establish the rule of queen Victoria. On 1st November 1858 queen Victoria's announcement was published all over India. What follows was stated therein, "From now onwards Company's rule is ended and we (i.e. queen Victoria) have taken the governance of India in our hands. Except those who are guilty of killing our English subjects, the rest of people who put in arms before 1st January 1859, will be forgiven. The custom of adoption among Hindustanis will, from now onwards, be considered valid and adopted sons will be considered heir to the property and royal throne; there will not be any kind of interference in religious beliefs and religious observances; the conditions of all treaties entered into by the Company with indigenous rulers so far will be honoured honestly; henceforth, any princely state of any Indian ruler or any of his rights will not be snatched; all Indians will be treated on the same footing as Britishers."

After this announcement of queen Victoria and getting disappointed with the failure of revolution many revolutionaries asked for forgiveness but the prominent leaders – Nana Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal etc. considered it below their dignity to do so. Britishers had maintained pressure on revolutionary leaders and soldiers. Revolutionaries were forced to cross border with Nepal. About sixty thousand men, women and children entered

Nepal with Nana Saheb, Bala Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal and Birjis Qadar. There was exchange of letters between Nana Saheb and the then king of Nepal Jang Bahadur. Nana Saheb first requested the Nepal court to give assistance against Britishers. After that he sought only the permission for Indian exiles to stay in Nepal. Jang Bahadur accepted none of these requests; rather he permitted British forces to come to Nepal and annihilate Indian exiles. Many of them threw their weapons and returned to India; many were absorbed in forests and mountainous regions. Nana Saheb was not prepared to surrender to Britishers under any circumstances.

When Britishers came to know that all leaders of revolt were assembled in Nepal and they were making preparations to wage war against Britishers once again, Sir Collin Campbell proceeded to Nepal with a large force. At that time Nana Saheb had about five thousand soldiers. On 12th December 1858 British forces attacked the revolutionary forces on the bank of Rapti. Sitting on elephants, Nana Saheb, Begum Hazrat Mahal, Veni Madhav etc. operated their armies. As that area of Nepal was mountainous and full of forests, British forces had to face a lot of difficulties. It had to turn back under compulsion. This was the last battle Nana Saheb had fought with British forces. Nana Saheb had won this battle.

Nana Saheb conveyed a message again to the king of Nepal Jang Bahadur to let them stay in Nepal. But Jang Bahadur issued orders for Nana to leave Nepal. Then somebody suggested that if Nana Saheb sent his forces back, Jang Bahadur may allow him to stay in Nepal. But Nana Saheb did not accept it. He apprehended that once he was without forces, Jang Bahadur may arrest him and hand over to Britishers.

One letter of Nana Saheb written from Nepal and addressed to Hope Grant is available in which he had written – “Who has authorised you to occupy Hindustan and holding me to be guilty? Are you foreigners emperors and we are thieves in our own country?”

Quoting the statements made available by the famous Historian Rajwade, about last days of Nana Saheb, Shriniwas Balaji Hardikar has written in his book, '*1857 Ka Swadhinta Sangram*', "Women belonging to Nana Saheb's family had also gone to Nepal with him. They remained there for forty years. Rana Jang Bahadur helped them. Nana Saheb's sister Kusumawati alias Bayabai Apte also stayed in Nepal with him. She died in 1917. Whatever she told before her death to historian Rajwade about Nana Saheb's death appears to be most reliable. In her own words – "Nana Saheb proceeded towards Nepal. But nobody was prepared to give him shelter there. As soon as he crossed India's border, the king of Nepal would have driven him out. The Sudarshan Chakra of Britishers was hovering above him all day and night. Nana never had peace. For full fourteen months he kept running from this territory to that. Eventually, due to excessive exertion and suffering Nana caught fever. That converted into prolonged fever (Jeerna Jwar). Nana Saheb was lying unconscious with fever; even then the Rana of Nepal kept asking him to leave Nepal. Then people sent us (women) to a nearby village and took Nana Saheb to a village named Devkhori. He breathed last there. People cremated him there and came to us with his remains. The after-death rites of Nana Saheb were performed before me; I was twelve year old then."

Had the plan of Nana Dhundhupant Peshwa to free India from the clutches of Britishers succeeded, India would have taken a different shape. There were many reasons for failure of this revolution-but there was no lack of efforts on the part of Nana Saheb. The consciousness of freedom was aroused by his plan of revolution. Its spark may have been put out then but its fire did not extinguish and the country gained freedom after ninety years. Undoubtedly, the plan of 1857 revolution that Nana Saheb chalked out in Bithur with his associates Ajimullah Khan and Tatyasaheb Tope was an extraordinary idea. For organising his countrymen, for arousing consciousness in masses spread over such a vast tract, even in an age lacking means of communication, he will always be held in high esteem in Indian history.

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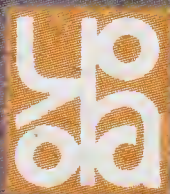
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The year 1857 is an important milestone in the history of Indian freedom struggle. Foregoing all barriers of region, province, class, caste and religion, entire country rose to participate in the common cause of ending the foreign rule. This beginning of national struggle eventually culminated in the independence of the country in 1947.

Several sagas of patriotism and bravery were created during this struggle. A descendent of Pune's Maratha Peshwas, Nana Saheb, was the leading superhero of this struggle. Under his clever leadership was shaped the scheme of this great war and very secretly a grand organisation was erected. Several intellectuals believe that if the rebellion had not erupted before time, it would certainly have resulted in country's freedom.

Well known author Dr Harikrishna Devsare has presented various dimensions of Nana Saheb's personality as well as the story of his able leadership in this book.



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